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BEYOND ECCLESIASTICAL NATIONALISM:  
AGENCY AND SELFHOOD IN THE ORTHODOX WORLD  
THE CONSTELLATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY MACEDONIA AND MOLDOVA

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## Author's Declaration

I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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## **Abstract**

Against the background of an innate imperative for ecclesial unity, the intensifying antagonistic plurality of the Orthodox Church poses an array of research questions. The continuous social relevance of Orthodoxy, as well as the general entanglement of political and religious identities in a number of societies make these research questions not only relevant to theology and ecclesiology, but also to political studies. The current account aims to address one of the fundamental problems of modern Orthodox ecclesiastical governance and that is the issue of Selfhood and agency.

Previous literature has linked Orthodox jurisdictional subjectivity with the advent of the modern nation state. Indeed, the institutional architecture of the majority of Orthodox Churches today is almost inextricably connected with this paradigm of political and social organization. However, the link between nation and state on one hand and ecclesiastical particularity on the other proves to be far from universal. In the light of unexplainable from nation-centric perspective cases, the current study attempts to provide an alternative ontology for ecclesiastical Selfhood and agency. The scope of the project covers the contemporary ecclesiastical dynamics in two comparable constellations, these of Macedonia and Moldova.

Based on constructivist and poststructuralist theoretical and methodological premises, the study focuses on the discursive practices related with the establishment and/or contestation of ecclesiastical institutions. The analytical comparison between the public discourses, produced by the competing jurisdictions in the two countries, outlines three key articulations crucial for the emergence of particular Orthodox Churches. A nascent ecclesiastical Subject is constructed through an identification with a radical social object/discourse, by articulation of a representative role vis-à-vis certain social group, and by narrating the existing power relations as unjust and/or meaningless.

If generalized, these findings put forward a new perspective on the emancipatory and hegemonic practices, which modern Orthodox ecclesiastical governance involves.

Key words: Orthodox Church, nationalism, poststructuralism, Macedonia, Moldova

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## **List of Abbreviations**

Bessarabian Metropolitanate – BM

Macedonian Orthodox Church – MacOC

Metropolitanate of Chişinău and all Moldova – MCM

Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric – OOA

Romanian Orthodox Church – RomOC

Russian Orthodox Church – RusOC

Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia – ROCOR

Second World War – WWII

Serbian Orthodox Church – SerOC

USSR – Union of Socialist Soviet Republics

## Introduction

For almost the last 200 years, the ecclesiastical governance of the Orthodox Church<sup>1</sup> has been marked by intensifying disintegration and fragmentation. The existing literature suggests that this process is genealogically linked with the influence of modernity on the Orthodox World (e.g., Makrides 2013). This influence, it has been argued, can hardly be theorized as a single, unidirectional, and coherent process (Roudometof 2013). The proliferation of independent Orthodox jurisdictions, however, has been predominantly attributed predominantly to the advent of modern nationalism and the consolidation of nation states (e.g., Werth 2013). In the light of unexplainable cases from such perspective, the current study suggests an alternative analytical framework, which aims, in addition, at providing a better understanding of the phenomenon in terms of both ontology and epistemology.

With the purpose of demonstrating the insufficiencies of nation- and state-centric approaches, Macedonia<sup>2</sup> and Moldova<sup>3</sup> are interpreted in this study as “cases” of ecclesiastical dynamics. Taken as such, these two constellations composed of a multitude of different processes offer fertile ground for comparative analysis. Against the background of many similarities in their state, national, social, and confessional developments, Macedonia and Moldova diverge significantly in the composition of their ecclesiastical governance with respect to Orthodoxy. Macedonia currently has practically the biggest unrecognized Orthodox ecclesiastical organization in the world, an organization with undeniable social and political relevance in the country and among Macedonians abroad. Moldova, on other hand, is the biggest, predominantly Orthodox

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<sup>1</sup> The name *Orthodox Church* I would use to denominate the dogmatic and institutional space of the Orthodox Chalcedonian Christianity (for typology and definitions, see e.g., Binns 2002).

<sup>2</sup> I would use the designation *Macedonia* and *Macedonian* in reference to the territory of present-day Republic of North Macedonia and its predecessor – the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the related with them local actors, processes, and phenomena.

<sup>3</sup> I would use *Moldova* and *Moldovan* in reference to the territory of present-day Republic of Moldova and the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, as well as the related with them local actors, processes, and phenomena.

independent country in the world which has never had (recognized or unrecognized) *autocephalous* (jurisdictionally independent from any external authority) Orthodox structure “of its own”, neither has it witnessed an official aspiration for such.

The existing dominant interpretative models accounting for processes in the Orthodox Church’s jurisdiction point mainly in two directions. The first one stresses on the relationship between nationhood and self-governance and assumes a certain teleological link between the two, a link that is transmitted also to ecclesiastical administration (e.g., Ramet 1989). The second direction emphasizes on the centrality of the state and its supposedly constitutive role for the establishment of independent church structures (e.g., Kitromilides 1989). While both approaches offer certain insights on the matter, they fail to account systematically for the emergence of particular churches as a *sui generis* phenomenon. A look at the recent history would demonstrate that often for the inception of independent Orthodox jurisdictions neither state is absolutely necessary, nor nationhood (for instance, the Orthodox Church in America or some “Old Calendarist” structures in Southeast Europe). Moreover, as the constellation of Moldova demonstrates, even when both are arguably taking place (including, in a space whereby Orthodoxy is playing a significant social role) such particularist development is not to be taken for granted. In the existing literature, there is also a marginal third, more nuanced perspective (e.g., Zabarah 2011) which suggests a closer look into the historical legacies, which the given jurisdictions inherit. Such a gaze is, indeed needed, though structural determinism has its own explanatory limitations.

In order to go beyond the existing approaches and their limitations, the study at hand offers an analytical framework inspired by poststructuralist and constructivist accounts on Selfhood and agency. The aim of this analysis is to provide a better understanding of how modern Orthodox ecclesiastical jurisdiction is constructed and how it changes. *How is an emergence of a particular Orthodox church made possible?* An answer to this research question is developed as it follows.

The first chapter of the study familiarizes the reader with the existing theoretical and conceptual perspectives on the relationship between Orthodoxy and socio-political constellations in general. Since the key object under scrutiny in this research is the Orthodox ecclesiastical governance, a summary and assessment of the existing analytical

paradigms related with it is presented, along with a short historical account. Subsequently, some key theoretical perspectives on the crucial for this study relationship between modernity and Orthodoxy is outlined. The next part consists of a review of the literature on ecclesiastical politics (or political ecclesiology) in Moldova and Macedonia. Following this presentation and assessment of the exiting knowledge, the study offers its alternative account on conceptualizing and theorizing emergence of particular jurisdictions within the Orthodox Church. The subsequent chapter on methodology introduces the rationale for case selection and the respective historical backgrounds. The presentation of the methodology and the method is followed by an analysis section in which the results of the research are discussed. The final part contains conclusions, possible theoretical generalizations, limitations of the used analytical framework, as well as recommendations for further research.

## **Theoretical background**

The interaction between religion and politics has been one of the most salient topics in European humanities and social sciences for centuries. From Augustine's "City of God" to the contemporary sociology of religion, hundreds of authors have offered a myriad of ways to interpret the interplay between what can generally be called faith and governance. The current chapter of the study, however, does not aim to provide a comprehensive review of the literature concerned with the link between religion and politics in general, but rather to locate the suggested research question bellow into the network of analytical models which examine this link.

The key research question of this study is: *How is an emergence of a particular Orthodox Church made possible?* Such a query is, arguably, rather theoretical. Hence, in order to map the state-of-the-art-of its problematics, this chapter would inevitably have to engage in conceptual and theoretical discussion. Yet, the aim of this section of the study is not to develop *the* theoretical framework of the analysis at hand, but rather to review the existing analytical perspectives in order to see what answers to the research question they offer or lead to.



In the following pages, the existing relevant analytical approaches concerned with Orthodox Christianity and its general relationship with society and politics are presented and assessed. Subsequently, the studies concerned with the specific constellations of Macedonia and Moldova are reviewed.

### **Orthodoxy, Society and Politics. Conceptualizations and Theorizations**

One of the first, more general assumptions that could be deduced from the suggested research question, given that it is proposed in social science context, is related with a certain presupposed specificity of the relationship between Orthodox Christianity, society, and politics. Indeed, what this study aims to understand better is not the emergence of any particular church, but of an Orthodox one. In that sense, is there a political dimension of the Orthodox Christianity which distinguishes it as a confession and makes the Orthodox Church(es)'s relations to political power somewhat idiosyncratic?

Samuel Huntington (1996) argues that there is a distinct “Orthodox civilization”, separate – most importantly – from the “Western” one. This *Civilization* is depicted as formed as a result of the Byzantine heritage, the theological differences with other branches of Christianity, the history of various foreign cultures' dominations over *Orthodox populations*, the “limited” exposure to Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment and subsequently the specific political systems that Orthodoxy has happened to have developed in. All these *conditions*, in different degrees, are indeed part of the Orthodox World's past. However, the diversity of often contrasting historical, institutional, and cultural experiences within it, proves to be so vast (Roudometof 2013: 170) that any theorization of Orthodoxy as uniform *culture*, signifying one holistic political space, let alone a singular agent, would rather obfuscate than reveal insights about the link between Orthodoxy and politics.

Another prominent analytical approach related to the political and institutional aspects of the Orthodox World is linked with the concept of *symphony*. Symphonia (Greek: συμφωνία – “accord”) is a Byzantine conception of Church – State relations which posits

that spiritual and political leadership should ideally exercise their authority *autonomously*, but simultaneously *in congruence*. Church and State in symphony are envisaged to operate in their own spheres, “the things divine” and “the things human” respectively, but in accordance with each other – in order to pursue the *common good* (Ghodsee 2009: 228). Authors such as Dennis Dunn (2016: 19) interpret *symphony* as a synonym to “caesaropapism”, the latter being “a definite doctrine advocating the submission of Church to State” (Toumanoff 1946: 213). Kalkandjieva (2011: 588), alternatively, argues that *symphony* and *caesaropapism* designate the different approaches of the “two camps” in the academic community, split in their definitions of Church – State relations in the Orthodox World.

The confusion is not accidental. It is important to emphasize that *symphonia*, being one of the most prominent concepts, including today, used to theorize the relationship between Orthodoxy and politics, was articulated at first in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, by the Byzantine emperor Justinian I (Knox 2003: 576). It applied to the *sacerdotum* and the *imperium* (Dvornik 1966: 839-840) as they were understood *back then*, transcending the institutions (in a modern sense) of Church and State that is (Kalkandjieva 2011: 589). “Unity between powers”, rather than a relationship between actors is to be found in the meaning of this Eastern Roman *diarchal ideal*, as Kalkandjieva argues (*idem*). In sum, *symphony* as a conceptual and theoretical paradigm has little explanatory potential today, notwithstanding its *normative appeal* in some cases.

It is argued, however, that *the symphonic model* was, to a great extent, “inherited” by the medieval “Orthodox states” (Bulgaria, Serbia, Russia, etc.) (Obolensky 1971, Dunn 2016), and could be seen, according to Leustean (2008: 424), in “Orthodoxy’s attitude towards politics until today”. This argument suggests that due to its historical experience and institutional heritage, Orthodox Christianity as a confession is prone to accommodating (intense) cooperation and close relations between its structures and state authorities. This latter point is intimately related with the question of emergence of particular Orthodox churches, as it is demonstrated below, and requires an assessment already at this stage of the study.

McGuckin (2003: 278) argues that “the idea of Symphonia was an aspiration, not an elaborated political theory”. More importantly, *symphonia* was, as mentioned before,

firstly articulated from a position of political authority and it has no substantial grounds in Early Christian teaching or in the New Testament. Cyril Hovorun (2018: 104) analyzes *symphony* as a form of “political Orthodoxy”, a “deviation from the original Christian Orthodoxy of separation between religion and politics”, that is. Hovorun (idem) also argues that the idea of *symphony* is not “harmful” in itself, but it provides potential for “unorthodox” practices such as “coercion”, for instance. There are other critical accounts on the idea of *symphony* from a theological perspective<sup>4</sup>, but what this study is interested in is whether there is a feature innate to Orthodoxy, that presupposes a certain mode of interaction between Church and political actors, regardless of its normative evaluations.

Cyril Hovorun’s (2017: 1) distinction between the “nature of the Church” and its “structures” comes to a point here. “[O]nly what was always observable in the entire church belongs to its nature”, he argues (Hovorun 2017: 183). Although this differentiation is more theological than social scientific, it helps us to distinguish between the often divergent logics of the Orthodox Church’s administration and Orthodoxy’s theology. Following Hovorun’s logic, the *ecclesial structures* are those flexible, changeable and temporary institutions of the Church, which are concerned with its jurisdiction. That said, one could argue that there is nothing natural in Orthodox Church’s intimate cooperation with any state institutions. However, certain Church structures, in certain periods have established close “symbiotic relations” (Hovorun 2018, Vassiliadis 2003) with the *temporal authorities*. In the last decades, such relations have been increasingly visible and widely scrutinized, hence the generalizations about the Church – State relations in the Orthodox World as a whole (among others Perica 2002: 7). The studies accounting for these relations and the paradigms that make them possible are reviewed in some detail below, but before that – what is “Orthodox World” and how does it is relevant for this study?

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<sup>4</sup> “In the thought of Justinian, the “symphony” between “divine things” and “human affairs” was based upon the Incarnation, which united the divine and human natures, so that the person of Christ is the unique source of the two - the civil and ecclesiastical hierarchies. The fundamental mistake of this approach was to assume that the ideal humanity which was manifested, through the Incarnation, in the person of Jesus Christ could also find an adequate manifestation in the Roman Empire.” (Meyendorff 1979: 152)

Various authors speak about *Orthodox World* (Kitromilides 2018, Kalkandjieva 2011, Hovorun 2017, Perica 2002, Casiday 2012, Dunn 2016 among others) and *Orthodox Commonwealth* (Roudometof 2013, Payne 2007, Agadjanian 2014, Leustean 2018, Zabarah 2013 among others). Although none of the accounts provides definitions of these terms, it is evident that both denote the *religious space* of Orthodoxy as a theological (dogmatic and ecclesiological) dimension on one hand and the *societal space* where Orthodox Christianity is (culturally) a predominant religion on the other. Therefore, it is simultaneously shaped by (in terms of its structures) and shaping societal and institutional identities. The Orthodox World *qua* societal and *geo-religious space* (“Orthodox lands” – Roudometof 2013: 235) finds its place in the title of this study not only because it is a handy concept, but also because it offers a framework which allows integrated analysis of the developments of various different ecclesiological and political Selves, which nonetheless share a certain common idiosyncrasy. This idiosyncrasy, however, does not suggest a single common political or social essence, nor it does assume a certain fixed causality within the domain in question.

As mentioned earlier, there are shared trends in the interaction between some Orthodox institutions and the corresponding political authorities in various localities. Additionally, there are commonalities with regard to the more general place and role of the Orthodox Churches in the political and social life of the communities where Orthodoxy is a predominant religion. In the next paragraphs one key feature of Orthodox World’s relative idiosyncrasy is outlined and that is the distinctive jurisdiction of the Church.

### **Orthodox Church’s Jurisdiction. Concepts and Approaches**

In order to provide a better understanding of how is an emergence of a certain entity made possible, one should look first at the existing approaches that define the entity in question as such. Any definition of a particular church in Orthodoxy would be impossible without taking into account the ecclesiological principles of Eastern Christianity and more specifically the institution of *autocephaly*.

The *autocephaly*, or the principle of independent self-governance of the local (territorial) Orthodox Churches, is interpreted in varied ways by different ecclesiastical actors, political subjects, and scholars. While the definition of the term is rather straightforward, the various hermeneutics of its application require a presentation of the *autocephaly* debate at this point. Mapping the state-of-the-art of the scholarly literature on the emergence of particular Orthodox churches would be a difficult task without elaborating on the different directions in the discussion around this ecclesiological tenet.

Autocephaly (from Greek: αὐτοκεφαλία – “self-headed”) is “one of the oldest institutions” of the Church, as Hovorun (2017: 88) argues, and its notion has remained “consistent and unchanged” (Erickson 1991: 110) in contrast to its practice. An “autocephalous Church”, as Shishkov (2014: 200) summarized a widely shared definition, “has the source of its power in itself: it elects its head on its own and makes decisions concerning church life – that is, it is not subordinate to any other autocephalous church, thus being independent of other churches in everything except doctrinal matters”. The *forms* which autocephaly took throughout the history of Christianity have nevertheless varied significantly. Hovorun (idem) and Erickson (idem) provide some of the most comprehensive historical accounts on this ecclesiological principle from antiquity to now. However, while they both note (along with Payne 2007 and Makrides 2013 among others) the gradual transformation of the *practice* of Church self-governance from a purely organizational principle towards its openly political instrumentalization (intensifying from XIX onwards), they do not elaborate on the *conditions* under which a particular articulation of autocephaly becomes *meaningful*.

There are a few very insightful analyses of autocephaly in its modern meaning (as a category in the intersection of operation of ecclesiology and politics). These accounts provide a number of analytical coordinates, on the basis of which the conditions for an emergence of a particular ecclesiastical agency could be theorized.

Dareg Zabarah (2013) analyzes autocephaly through the prism of “discursive institutionalism” (Zabarah 2013: 49) and suggests a closer look into the *interaction between* and the *socialization of* ecclesiastical and national elites. Zabarah interprets the aforementioned *symphony* also as an “interdependence between discourses” (idem) that the modern political and Church leaderships in the Orthodox World have inherited from

Byzantium. The *mutual influence* between domestic Church and local political actors leads, in this author's view, to a "convergence" in the way nations in the Orthodox World were "imagined" by "clerical, political and intellectual" elites (idem). The emergence of particular churches, therefore, is seen from this perspective as a process parallel to the one of the emergence of states – nation states yield national churches, imperial states yield imperial churches, so the author argues.

Another scholarly perspective that theorizes *autocephaly* as a category linked with sovereignty is elaborated by Andrey Shishkov (2014). His approach, inspired by Carl Schmitt's theorization, proposes understanding autocephaly as a "supreme power" mirroring the secular concept of sovereignty. The sovereign is the one who "decides on the exception" and the emergence of a new autocephalous Church is seen from this point of view as an exception. Historically, there have been a few modes of producing such exceptions: an already autocephalous Church grants autocephaly to a 'part of itself', a pan-Orthodox Council decides on the autocephaly of a certain ecclesiastical structure, or a given church declares itself independent, negotiating recognition later.

From the standpoint presented by Shishkov, an autocephaly "granted" by another Church remains an expression only of a "limited [ecclesiastical] sovereignty" (idem), precisely because the decision was taken *outside* of the autocephalous. In that sense, a fully independent church is one that produces the exception *itself*. The author, however, presents this *Schmittian approach* to ecclesiastical self-governance only to overcome it. While the *exception from within* scenario is creating autocephaly "from nothing", he argues (idem) that, a *pan-Orthodox Council*, wherein all the *sovereign* Churches give away part of their *sovereignty* in exceptional fashion, could provide a "continuity" of power which will legitimize the nascent Church. Shishkov's analysis offers insightful paradigm for analyzing modern autocephaly in Westphalian terms, but it does not, however, address the issue of what makes a certain ecclesiastical structure willing to be *self-headed* in the first place.

Charles Sanderson (2005) in his doctoral thesis on *autocephaly* presents an analytical framework stemming from modern organization theories. The focus of his analysis is on the constant change of the organizational forms autocephaly took over time, which came as a result of its various "institutional frameworks" and a specific external "enforcement".

The former is a “contractual” system between the independent Churches, which is composed of various canon laws. What is more, it also consist of different levels of sedimentation of precedential practices that have developed into *traditions*. “Enforcement” is defined as a “third party activity” (the *state*), which is there “to ensure that rules are adhered”, but it could also break them – often as imposing reconfigurations of the system, initiating for instance the establishment of a particular Church. In Sanderson’s account, again, the *organization* of *autocephaly* is aptly conceptualized and theorized, but its *practice* remains understudied.

Ramet’s (1988) account on *autocephaly* underlines the Church – Nation – State link that underpins the modern conception of this ancient organizational principle. The emergent self-governing churches, following Ramet’s theorization, are “co-opted” by the state, often through the act of their very establishment. In that sense, the creation of an independent Church becomes “part of the state building process” (Ramet 1988: 7) because of the fusion of political and religious unity that nationalism brought. The scholarly approaches covering the modern transformations in the Orthodox World are discussed further in the next section, but concerning *autocephaly*, it is important to note at this point that the *ecclesiastical independence* of the emergent particular churches is viewed by Ramet and other scholars (e.g., Kalaitzidis 2013 among others) as an *institutional dependence* to the respective states.

One of the conclusions that could be drawn from the presented discussion is that there is one taken-for-granted, causal link that dominates – often implicitly – the existing literature on *autocephaly*: nation, state, or nation-state yield (aspirations for) ecclesiastical self-governance (and sometimes *vice versa*). Besides the aforementioned accounts, also Schmemmann (1979), Walters (2002), Kitromilides (2010) *inter alia* subscribe to this logic to different degrees. This causality became a self-evident interpretative model for the emergence of particular churches, independent ethno-national and/or state churches, these are (according to the model). Hovorun (2018: 125) summarizes the *motives* for autocephaly as “etatism, phyletism, nationalism and even anti-imperialism”. Matsuzato (2009) problematizes the universality of this “state-church system” asserting that “the rules of the game in in Orthodoxy” have been established long before the modern sovereign state (Matsuzato 2009: 239). These rules, in the author’s view, were established in an *imperial setting* which makes Orthodoxy “a religion of empire” even today

(Matsuzato 2009: 240). As a result, Matsuzato holds, the Orthodox Churches are “relatively independent from secular politics” (idem) and often follow different logic in their actions. While these points are, to a great extent, shared by the study at hand, the latter also sees Matsuzato’s approach as failing to provide a substantial account on the genealogy of the particular ecclesiastical organizations’ subjectivity and, moreover, as leaving their very emergence unproblematicized.

From the perspective of the current study, there is an overemphasis in the existing literature on the defining role of *external* structures and agency for the emergence of particular churches. This emphasis analytically undermines the importance of the latter’s *own subjectivity*. While the dominant paradigm allows an explanation for many of the emergences of particular churches in the Orthodox World, it fails to explain fully, among others, the “case” of Moldova. The current account would attempt to problematize the self-evident status of such *externalization* and to propose an alternative framework for analyzing agency and selfhood in the Orthodox World. However, one has to first account for the historical and theoretical foundations of the dominant interpretative model in order to overcome it.

### **Orthodoxy and Modernity. Accounting for Transformations**

Before modernity, the emergence of particular ecclesial structures as independent jurisdictional bodies has occurred either as a position on the heretic – non-heretic axis i.e., *outside of Orthodoxy* (e.g., the emergence of the Coptic church, to name one) or on the basis of borders of governance. The situation in the Orthodox World in the last two centuries has notably changed due to various societal transformations – affecting both politics and ecclesiastical affairs.

The transformations in the Orthodox World, in contrast to the ones in *the World of Western Christianity*, have operated in a possibility for fragmentation of the ecclesiastical body without necessarily resulting in canonical disintegration (e.g., the Reformation) The key reason for that possibility, as mentioned earlier, is the distinct Orthodox ecclesiology, which Makrides (2008: 369) describes as “administrative pluralism”. What is the reason,



however, for the intensifying fragmentation in the first place? In order to situate the present research in the web of analytical approaches covering the emergence of particular churches, it is important to present and assess some of the key scholarly works on Orthodox World's modern transformations and their implications for ecclesiastical Selfhood.

The Enlightenment's influence on the Christian societies in Southeastern Europe from XIX onwards, as Kitromilides (2006, 2018) and Payne (2007) argue, has not been initially welcomed by the Orthodox Church. Subsequently, however, the clergy (or at least a significant part of it) has emerged as one of the key promoters of modern ideas, such as national self-determination (Ramet 1998, Leustean 2007). This evolution from a direct opposition against modernity to the internalization of some of its key elements has marked the way Selfhood has been further imagined in the Orthodox World.

The *modernization* of the Orthodox World, however, as an analytical paradigm is not to be taken as unproblematic. Jödicke (2014) argues that the debate around one of the fundamental elements of modernity – secularism – has two opposing sides: the theories that introduce the dichotomy “modernization *or* religion” and the ones that focus on “modernization *of* religion” (Jödicke 2014: 8). Both approaches, according to the author, underestimate the agency of religion to actively “shape society” (ibid.). Roudometof (2013: 8-10) also takes issue with the “conventional modernization” perspective and its “single monolithic master narrative of [...] secularization as universally applicable”. Alternatively, he suggests “glocalization” (instead of *modernization*), as an analytical framework that could provide a more sensitive approach vis-à-vis the often diverging processes in the Orthodox World and which could go beyond the “particular historical experience of the West”. More specifically, Roudometof conceptualizes *multiple glocalizations*, a plurality which resonates with Jödicke's assertion that “there is no telos to modernity” (Jödicke 2014: 10).

The *glocalizations* of Orthodoxy are those processes that fuse in different ways “religious universalism” and “local particularisms” (Roudometof 2013: 158): *vernacularization* (the blending of religious universalism with specific vernacular language), *indigenization* (integration of particular cultural codes, habits, and rituals into Orthodoxy), *nationalization* (the fusion of national and religious institutions' *raison d'être*), and

*transnationalization* (the processes linked with the motion and presence of nationalized religion in *foreign* localities). These transformations do not exclude one another, but they also do not necessarily go hand in hand. Among them, *nationalization* is the one that deserves particular attention in this study. Roudometof describes it as a process in which the nation becomes a “foundation for the religious institutions’ claim to legitimacy” (Roudometof 2013: 159), but which functions also to strengthen the legitimacy of the state authorities. *Nationalization* is defined, as well, as a process through which confessional membership intertwines with national identity (Brubaker 2012) and thereby religion becomes a *tool* and a *source* of “nation formation” (Roudometof 2013: 85).

The Orthodox churches’ record of engagement with nationalism has been one of the most studied topics within the general discussion on religion – politics link in the Orthodox World. Many scholars have focused on different aspects of this engagement, such as the nationalism’s effects on Orthodox universalism (Kitromilides 2003), the ethno-symbolic transfer of meanings from Orthodoxy to national identity and vice-versa (Leustean 2005a, 2005b, Karpov et al 2012), the role of ecclesiastical narratives for the construction of national identity (Tadic-Papanikolaou 2013), autocephaly and nation-building (Ramet 1988, Zabarah 2013), the problematics of national-confessional diasporas (Papathomas 2014), and the specifics of the fusion of *ecclesiastical* and *national* in particular case studies (Agadjanian 2001, Mavrogordatos 2003, Ivekovic 2002, Kalkandjieva 2014, Perica 2002, Bogomilova 2015), to just name a few. The scholars who analyze these processes agree that Orthodox Christianity played a crucial role in shaping national identity in the societies where it existed as a predominant religion. The fusion of identities – state, national and religious – is what Nonka Bogomilova (2004: 8) calls “religious – political synthesis” and Victor Roudometof (2008: 67) – “a modern synthesis”. Under the conditions of such *synthesis* every element becomes a *representative* of the others. Payne (2010: 712) goes further and develops the notion of “spiritual security” as a key dimension of this identity intermixture. Concerning religious organizations, this transformation into mutual representation became possible, according to Makrides (2013), as result of the new imperative brought by modernity to the Orthodox institutions – the modern Church *has to relate to a nation* in order to preserve its relevance in a secularizing society. The *symphony* between State and Church, Nenad Živković (Köllner et al 2018: 228) asserts, becomes possible in modern context when the interests of the

two “align, in the ideal case as national interests”. This development comes with the emergence of a distinct type of nationalism – the ecclesiastical one (Kalaitzidis 2013: 485, Danforth 2000, Ramet 1988).

Since the notion of *nation* and its multiple meanings and usages prove to be so fundamental for theorizing modern Orthodox ecclesiology, it is important to present here a definition of *ecclesiastical nationalism* in order to proceed with the discussion. The following one is the only clearly delineated definition in the existing literature:

“Ecclesiastical nationalism consists in several distinct aspects of church activity: in the church’s preservation and development of the cultural heritage, in the church’s use of specific language for liturgy and instruction, in the advancement of specific territorial claims on putative ethnic ground, and the cultivation of the social idea itself, that is, the idea that given people, united by faith and culture, constitute a nation.” (Ramet 1988: 10)

In addition to this functional definition, a few more points could enrich the notion. Emilio Gentile (2005: 19) speaks of “political religion” as a phenomenon stemming from the process of “sacralization of politics” (ibid.). In that regard Leustean (2008: 421) points at the articulation of the nation as “divine manifestation”. Džalto (2013: 516), along the same vein, asserts “that all “Christian” nationalisms have precisely that effect – they secularize the Church by trying to sanctify the entire social and political sphere”. Namely, here is located the *modern transformation*, common for many ecclesiastical institutions in the Orthodox World. As Kalkandjieva (2011) shows, various particular Orthodox ecclesiastical organizations have been politicized centuries before modernity, but what is truly new for their social function in modern times is their *relation to the people*. The churches have to relate to the people, not merely as a “flock”, but as a *political subject* and, in the final analysis, as “an ultimate source of authority” (Roudometof 2013: 80). In that sense, the addressees of the modern churches’ discourses are not only the churchgoers, but much larger audiences which transcend the narrow spiritual communities.

The emerging particular Orthodox churches, from XIX century onwards, are *particular* inasmuch as they exercise spiritual jurisdiction over *particular societies*. Given the importance of Orthodoxy for identity formation in the areas where it is a predominant confession, this study interprets the *distinctiveness* of churches and societies as mutually constitutive. However, is the *particularity* of a church/society necessarily linked with nation, state or nation-state?

In the modern context, to a large extent, yes. However, this study treats nationalism as *one discourse* among many, which articulate *power relations* as a key dimension of their representations of social structures. What is more, the study at hand sees ecclesiastical subjects as capable of *independent social and political agency*, transcending the simple “state co-optation” paradigm. Such view is based on the assumption that the Orthodox jurisdictional structures, as other social agents, are positioned in certain relations of power and these could be articulated in divergent and hence competitive ways. The latter circumstance turns the Orthodox ecclesiastical structures into potential *political* subjects vis-à-vis each other and also in relation to other religious and secular counterparts. The approach this study takes recognizes the Church – Nation – State nexus as a key coordinate system for the articulation of ecclesiastical Selfhood. However, the emergence of particular churches would not be mechanically linked in the following analysis with the construction of a given nation or state, with the use of distinct language or the identification with particular ethnicity, etc. Rather, the articulations of *superiority* and *inferiority* (as positions ascribed to given ecclesiastical structures and hence to the communities that they represent and vice versa) would be at the core of tracing particular(ist) ecclesiastical identity.

In the existing literature, the emergence of particular Orthodox churches has not been analyzed systematically as a phenomenon, let alone from this particular angle. The constellations of contemporary Moldova and Macedonia are no exception. However, there are a number of relevant scholarly works that reveal important insights about the

developments linked with the Orthodox ecclesiastical jurisdictions in these two spaces. In the following paragraphs these works are briefly reviewed<sup>5</sup>.

## **Literature Overview of the Studies on Moldova**

The jurisdictional organization of the Orthodox ecclesiastical life in Moldova has been a central topic for various social science studies. They could be grouped into two categories: first, historical-interpretative accounts and second, theoretical-analytical researches.

The texts from the first category provide detailed tracing of the contemporary ecclesiastical history in Moldova and focus on the events and the processes related with shifts in the Church's jurisdiction. The accounts from this category are, to a great extent, descriptive (the most comprehensive one available in English is of Emil Dragnev 2011), but they also offer interpretations and explanations for the developments in question. Munteanu (2002), for instance, render the emergence of the Bessarabian Metropolitanate (BM) a *re-activation* "in protest at the over-politicized policies of the Russian Orthodox Patriarchy (sic)" (Munteanu 2002: 99). From that perspective, the creation of the *new old* Bessarabian ecclesiastical structure in 1991 is interpreted, at least partially, as a result of *antagonism*. Additionally, Munteanu describes the BM as a *representative* of the people in Moldova who "do not see any essential difference between the ethnic and cultural identity of Moldovans and Romanians, even though they may be living in two separate states" (Munteanu 2002: 97), while the people who remained "loyal" to the Russian Orthodox Church (RusOC) "seem rather indifferent to the political drifts in the country, including on the basis of their ethnic identity" (Munteanu 2002: 103). This perspective suggests an explanation for the ecclesiastical rivalry in Moldova that goes, at least to an extent, beyond *objective ethnic belonging*, but it interprets, nevertheless, the BM's ethnic identification rather as exhausting its identity. This identification, in principle could explain the aspiration for emancipation of BM from RusOC – as a national, anti-imperial

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<sup>5</sup> For a historical overview of the two constellations, please consult the *Case Selection and Historical Background* section.

struggle, etc. However, it offers no account for – one could go beyond an implicitly self-evident ethnic belonging argument – the immediate incorporation of the BM into the Romanian Orthodox Church (RomOC). Moreover, the Republic of Moldova was at the time already an independent state and articulations of domestic national identity were not absent.

Similarly, Turcescu and Stan (2003: 454) describe the “political” and “religious independence” that the “Moldovan Romanian-speakers” aspired to, only as independence from Moscow – due to the implicit assumption that since the former are namely *Romanian* speakers, independence from Bucharest was not on the table. The ethnicity- and language/culture-centric line of interpretation (Montgomery 2003, Cemârtan 2004) for the emergence of the BM *qua* part of RomOC fails to account for the implications that the Moldovan state independence has had on the ecclesiastical jurisdiction(s) there. Virtually all the papers in this category focus on the emancipation of the Bessarabian Metropolitanate from Moscow and offer little interpretation accounting for the persistence of the structures of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moldova. The Metropolitanate of Chișinău and all Moldova’s (MCM) continuous predominance in the country is attributed, implicitly, to the systematic discrimination of the Moldovan authorities against the BM (Munteanu 2002, Turcescu and Stan 2003, Cemârtan 2004, Avram 2014, Grigore 2016). However, the fact that the majority of the clergy in Moldova decided to remain subordinated to Moscow in first place (following the dissolution of the Soviet Union) and even after the official registration of the BM in 2002, cannot be explained (only) by legal or material factors or with language use and (perceptions of) ethnic belonging. However, the study at hand does not aim to analyze the reasons *why* the ecclesiastical jurisdictions in Moldova are in the adherence ratio they are, but rather, moving farther from essentialist interpretations, to explain *how* the local structures operate the way they do. In sum, the “objective dimensions” such as *ethnicity* or *language* cannot explain the current composition of the Orthodox ecclesiastical administration in Moldova, nor the *state policies* could do so to a satisfactory degree. A closer look into the actors’ discourses, on the other hand, is considered from the perspective of this study, a promising endeavor in that regard.

Avram (2014) offers one of the most detailed and comprehensive tracings of the post-1989 ecclesiastical dynamics in Moldova. One of the key contributions he makes to the

discussion on the ecclesiastical politics in this country is his account on a hypothetical Moldovan autocephaly. As the author sees it, *one* Orthodox Church in Moldova, independent from both Moscow and Bucharest would seem, at first glance, as a possible solution to the ecclesiastical conflict in the country. Such autocephaly could, following Avram's logic, "represent a factor for social cohesion" (Leustean et al 2014: 415) in a country split thus far by multiple political, social, and ecclesiastical divisions. The latter could be reconciled, the text suggests, by *unification* of all relevant ecclesiastical structures and by simultaneous *emancipation* from the current centers of authority. However, as the author further notes, the case of Moldovan autocephaly would be weakened by an opposition from the Romanian side – opposition to the idea of a separate Moldovan nation, which such ecclesiastical intendance could suggest (a similar point is also made by Cemârtan 2004). As for a united Moldovan ecclesiastical independence from RusOC's perspective – this scenario would face harsh resistance from Transnistria where the loyalty to Moscow remains undisputable, the study asserts. Besides the practical points that Avram makes about the highly unlikely recognition of a hypothetical autocephalous Moldovan Church and the possible new divisions in the society it might bring about, it is important to note something that transcends the practical concerns. An important element that has been omitted in the aforementioned study is the *appropriateness* of Moldovan ecclesiastical independence as it considered to be seen by the different ecclesiastical stakeholders. It is clear that the *logic of consequences* and the one of *habit* are at place when considering autocephaly in the case of Moldova. However, so did they in many other cases and yet autocephaly was unilaterally declared in multiple occasions. The *logic of arguing* and *persuasion*, i.e., the articulation of *appropriateness* by the relevant actors, is what the current study finds central to the discussion of autocephaly and therefore it would attempt to account for it further.

The literature from the second category consists of studies which offer a few different analytical strategies for the examination of the ecclesiastical dynamics in Moldova. Dareg Zabarah's (2011) paper on the "Orthodox Churches' role in defining the nation in post-Soviet Moldova" is based on the assumption that the institutional heritages, which the clerical and political elites from the two opposing sides have been brought into, play a decisive role in shaping the identities and worldviews of the organizations in question. Following this logic, Zabarah makes an in-depth analysis of the institutional background

of the ecclesiastical conflict in Moldova, offering, moreover, a detailed account of the *neam* and *narod* usages of *ethnos*<sup>6</sup>. These are terms, according to Zabarah (2011: 215) “conducive to [the] respective nation- and state-building processes” in Romania and Russia. Seen from this perspective, the Churches, being key factors in the group-building processes in *the two societies*, extrapolate their divergent understandings of *the social* onto Moldovan soil. The RomOC and RusOC are interpreted, in that vein, as direct agents of their “patron states” and the BM and MCM – just as *proxies* of Bucharest and Moscow, respectively.

While Zabarah’s paper reveals important insights about the institutional legacies of the relevant Orthodox Churches and offers a robust interpretation of the Moldovan and the Romanian national ideas, it does focus predominantly on the external factors in the ecclesiastical conflict in Moldova. The agency from within remains rather underestimated. What is more, the ecclesiastical rivalry in the country is, to a large extent, interpreted simply as *tension between two formal paradigms* of social organization, not as much as an interaction based on *struggle for power*. RomOC and RusOC could easily articulate their “rights of jurisdiction” as based on *both* meanings of *ethnos*. The currently subordinated to Moscow, Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia (ROCOR) for example, administrates the Russian Orthodox communities *outside of the Russian World* without any other specific mapping, i.e., the *ethnic* communities are administrated on *kin* principle. With regards to RomOC, it is easy to imagine how Bucharest would react if Roma people aspire for an *ethnic church* of their own on Romanian territory. In conclusion, an account which puts more emphasis on *relations of power*, rather than on isolated structural *legacy* is needed in order to fill the evident analytical gap.

Kimitaka Matsuzato’s (2009) paper on transborder nationalities and inter-Orthodox relations analyses the case of Moldova in the light of the developments in Transnistria (in comparison to Abkhazia). The focus on *de facto* states, however, does not limit the author to make a few more general conclusions about the ecclesiastical constellation in Moldova. Following closely the contemporary ecclesiastical and political dynamics in the country, Matsuzato’s account, enriched also by interviews with priests and politicians, makes an

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<sup>6</sup> *Neam* (Rom.) – “family, kin or tribe”; *Narod* (Rus.) – “inhabitants [...] of a common space” (Zabarah 2011: 216-217)



important assertion – “the logic of secular and religious politics [in Moldova] differ from each other” (Matsuzato 2009: 256). This “ambiguity”, from the author’s point of view, “provides a favorable environment for transborder politics” (ibid.). In other words, the interest of the Moldovan state (for instance – its territorial integrity) and the interests of the domestic ecclesiastical structures (e.g., canonical legitimacy) could sometimes not match and this might lead to de-centering of the political-ecclesiastical relations in Moldova at a certain level. This conclusion reveals an important aspect of ecclesiastical politics – the capacity of the Orthodox Churches for autonomous action (from the respective states). However, this very capacity *on a sub-autocephalous level* is not taken into account in Matsuzato’s theorization. The subordination of the ecclesiastical structures in Moldova to other national/state Churches is taken, in turn, for granted and the former’s agency seems underestimated. The study at hand attempts to provide a perspective, accounting for the domestic ecclesiastical organizations’ actions (or passivity) as *practices* not determined entirely by *belonging* or *history*, as Matsuzato’s study seems to suggest, but rather as coming from *relational positions* within a *hierarchical system*, positions that are never fully fixed and stabilized.

Christoffer Størup’s 2015 article on the “Orthodox geopolitics in the Moldovan ethnopolitics” offers one the most apt theoretical and methodological approaches for research on ecclesiastical identities in the country in question. Although this paper only “presents preliminary results of an ongoing Ph.D. project” (Størup 2015: 118) and does not display a detailed presentation of its analysis, it suggests an analytical perspective which is, to a considerable extent, shared by the study at hand.

Størup hypothesizes that “the local churches to a larger extent than recognized in the existing literature are acting independently pursuing their local interests and forming alliances to this end” (ibid.). While the author recognizes the importance of the geo- and ethno-political fields in which the domestic ecclesiastical structures operate, he asserts that the latter are “not enslaved to them” (Størup 2015: 119). In order to prove this hypothesis, the study suggests an examination of the official positions of the BM and the MCM and more specifically of the “historical narratives” present in their statements, as well as the articulations of “ethnic and geopolitical belonging”. Whether the BM and MCM are acting independently or not would be measured, according to the author, by

examining the extent to which their positions match with the ones of Bucharest and Moscow, respectively.

Størup's analytical standpoints prove to be relevant for the current study, however, a few problems occur with their implantation. First, the positions of the RomOC and RusOC are not only left unexamined in their own merit, but they are, in practice, equated – rather uncritically – with the positions of their “patron states” (ibid.). Second, while the *articulations of ethnic and national identity* coming from the BM and the MCM are examined vis-à-vis the corresponding positions of RomOC and RusOC, the *representations of geopolitical belonging* formulated by the local actors are surveyed in rather speculative fashion. For instance, Størup asserts that RomOC “has now embraced a European identity” (Størup 2015: 120), which is supposedly a position that has not been shared by the BM. Such conclusion is rather questionable, not only because it is drawn from an ostensible lack of “European discourse” (instead from a presence of a different one, for example), but also due to the problematic linking of the RomOC's discourse with the category of “European identity” at first place.

In conclusion, Christoffer Størup's account offers an insightful approach and methodology for analyzing the identities of Moldova's ecclesiastical structures, but the implementation of his suggested method is, however, unsystematic and at times conjectural. The current account would try to examine the identifications of the ecclesiastical structures in Moldova not only as ethno- and geo-political ones *per se*, but also as coming from certain relational positions in a network of dependencies and autonomies. Such examination is expected to reveal not a “measurable” degree of “discursive independence” of the domestic ecclesiastical organizations, but the nature of their subjectivity as such.

## **Literature Overview of the Studies on Macedonia**

Zabarah (2013: 48) notes that “due to the existing analytical bias in favor of the canonical churches, so called “uncanonical” churches and their influence on the political elite are often overlooked, although they shape both the political decisions of their host states and

Orthodoxy as well.” The processes in Macedonia provide a case at point. The few studies on the ecclesiastical politics in Macedonia that exists are, as in the case of Moldova, mostly descriptive – historical-interpretative and often displaying normative agenda. There are, however, a few accounts that cover Macedonian ecclesiastical jurisdictional affairs, whose contributions would serve this study as points of reference on conceptual and theoretical level. In the next paragraphs, these points are discussed shortly.

One of the dominant interpretative models accounting for the ontology of the ecclesiastical self-governance in Macedonia is the *restoration* model (Borisov 2017, Trajanovski 2017, Gjorgjevski 2017, and Murzako 2018 among others). Although the *restoration* paradigm is not presented as an exhaustive *per se* reason for the emergence of an independent church structure in Macedonia, it remains one of the key arguments justifying the endogenous shift in ecclesiastical jurisdiction in 1967. The *historical justification* of church Selfhood, as Murzako (2018: 45) puts it, “makes sense ecclesiastically”. However, the fact of prior existence of an independent Orthodox ecclesiastical entity on the territory of today’s Macedonia does not suffice for its *re-establishment*. The existence of political *Macedonian* identity as such, though, provides the necessary framework for the “re-emergence” of a *Macedonian* church. The latter is viewed as a tool in the “struggle against the deniers of Macedonian identity” (Cepreganov and Sashko 2010). Snegarov quoted by Murzako (2018: 45-46), aptly makes this link asserting that the “autonomous spirit of Macedonia is not new”, but has its roots in the “spiritual sovereignty of Macedonia”. In effect, the conclusion that could be drawn for the current study is that only through the prism of certain social and/or political *episteme*, to put it in Foucauldian terms (Foucault 2005: 23), the powerful notion of *restoration* of a “perennial” ecclesiastical order could emerge as meaningful.

Linked with such *episteme* is the already mentioned interpretative model accounting for the autocephalist aspirations in Macedonia – the one based on *state* and *ethnic* grounds. This model appears to be, in many Macedonian texts, almost latent and rather self-evident or in other words – commonsensical. The end of the Second World War (WWII) and the emergence of the political unit *Macedonia* within the Yugoslav Federation is linked, by the literature in question, implicitly with an automatic arrival of (actions towards creating) a distinct ecclesiastical unit (Risteski 2009, Trajanovski 2017, Gjorgjevski 2017 among others). The “struggle” for “ecclesiastical independence” of Macedonia is presented as a

*natural* process in the Balkan context (Gjorgjevski 2017) and in that sense – a *regular* one, given the *Macedonian statehood* (within federal Yugoslavia and later as Republic of Macedonia) and the distinct *Macedonian nationhood*. However, from the perspective of this study, any assertion linked with an ostensibly *organic* existence of any political entity such as a state or a nation is to be problematized. The mutual *signification* and *legitimization* of church, nation, and state is a common practice in the modern Orthodox World, as discussed earlier. The acknowledgment of this pattern, however, does not provide in itself an explanation for the ontology of the particularity per se. Moreover, separate statehood and/or representations of distinct ethnicity do not automatically lead to aspirations for church self-governance (or *vice versa*), as evident from the modern Orthodox ecclesiastical history.

The third most common interpretation of the emergence a distinct Macedonian ecclesiastical jurisdiction is, to an extent, alternative to ones already described. A number of accounts (Perica 2002, Payne 2007, Nikolic and Dimitrijević 2017) describe the role of the Yugoslav authorities as pivotal to the emergence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MacOC). Perica (2002: 12) asserts, moreover, that the “Macedonian Church and the Macedonian nation were designed by Yugoslav communists”. The encouragement and the support of the post-WWII authorities both in Skopje and Belgrade for the “ecclesiastical independence of Macedonia” are evident and arguably have served multiple goals stretching from countering other (national) influences in the region (Perica 2002) to limiting the influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SerOC) at the overall domestic (Yugoslav) level (Nikolic and Dimitrijević 2017). However, this *instrumentalist* interpretation proves to be rather questionable. Ramet (1998) and Marinov (2013) both demonstrate that in Macedonia particularist ecclesiastical aspirations have occurred decades before Josip Broz Tito took power. Even if we assume that the establishment of MacOC received its key impetus from the authorities in Socialist Yugoslavia, it would be an overstatement to assert that such process can be initiated and conducted entirely from scratch and “designed” only from outside. A more, nuanced perspective would be to examine the emergence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church as a discursive practice, situated within a relational network, whereby the constructions of *outside* and *inside* are not taken for granted.

Another important point of reference for this study is related with the question why would the Serbian Church want to maintain its authority in Macedonia after WWII and more importantly after 1991? The literature concerned with this question is generally inclined towards identity-related explanations. The two most common ones are linked with the *negation* from SerOC's side of the existence *Macedonian ethnic identity* (Zdravkovski and Morrison 2014) and with certain procedural canonical reasoning, i.e., with *canonical identity* (Nikolic and Dimitrijević 2017). While these two aspects prove to be important, the current study would treat them not as essential in themselves, but rather as representative for the positions which the parties occupy in terms of status and authority. That is to say that from this study's point of view ethnicity and canonicity matter for the emergence (and recognition) of particular Orthodox churches inasmuch as they are articulated from a position of relational power.

Nenad Živković's (2018) account on the dynamics around the failed Niš Agreement between the SerOC and the MacOC offers valuable theoretical and methodological perspectives on the topic. Živković examines the "public pressure" on MacOC to discard the agreement through a critical discourse analysis of the public "reactions" to the initial draft document. In the author's view, this pressure from governmental actors and the media is to be considered crucial for the final rejection of the agreement from MacOC's side. The reason for that, as Živković notes, is the widely resonating depiction of the agreement as a *threat* to the Macedonian nation and statehood. While this analytical approach proves to be insightful, it does not suffice to account for the Macedonian ecclesiastical identity as one constructed *also* by its own discourse. A focus on the discourse of MacOC proper, from this study's point of view, would be beneficial for the better understanding of the Macedonian ecclesiastical Selfhood and the stemming from it subjectivity. Moreover, such focus is to be accompanied by emphasis not just on the upholding of a particular national/linguistic/ethnic/historical identity, but on the articulations of injustice and/or meaninglessness of given *externalized* hierarchy

As an overall assessment of the existing literature, it could be concluded that the emergence of particular churches has been interpreted predominantly either as processes linked with the assertion of given national/ethnic belonging or as an instrument of states to ensure their own legitimacy and the *strategic religious autonomy* of their citizens. The current account would try to demonstrate that while these interpretations provide a partial

explanation for some ecclesiastical polities' ontology, they are rather limited to account for multiple other cases, such as the Orthodox Church in America, the ROCOR, the Bulgarian "Alternative Synod", the Free Serbian Orthodox Church, the "Old Calendarists" in many countries, and the case(s) that would be examined here – the divided Orthodox Church in Moldova. What is more, one of this study's strategies is to treat national/ethnic particularism as essentially no different than any other jurisdictional particularisms in the Orthodox Church. In that sense, the current account is aiming to offer an alternative point of view, also with regards to the 'conventional cases'.

### **Theoretical, Conceptual, and Methodological Frameworks**

As mentioned earlier, due to character of the main research question, the previous section already had touched upon various theoretical and conceptual aspects of the topic. However, the analytical framework of this study is yet to be delineated and systematized. Aiming at this, in the following paragraphs a few steps are to be taken. First, a brief theoretical reading of the historical context of subjectivity in the Orthodox Church is introduced. This reading and the subsequently suggested analytical framework is inspired by Howarth's (2013) account on poststructuralism, which synthesizes and, in a sense, upgrades various other approaches. Second, an ontological account is introduced in order to address the problematics that the research question posits. Third and fourth, a few working definitions of the main concepts are suggested together with a discussion on the relations between these concepts. As a final fifth step, the main theoretical expectation are formulated.

### **The Orthodox Church and Poststructuralist Subjectivity**

The Christian Church as a jurisdictional organization operates as a system composed of territorial entities (Churches). These *local Churches* (Payne 2007) govern the organizational affairs of given local ecclesial communities. The local Church as a

community, since early Christianity has been administered hierarchically, having on the top of its structure a head *bishop* (Zajkovski 2018: 165). The bishop initially had full authority over the internal affairs within the respective *diocese* and was generally free of accountability to any external authority (besides when it comes to canonical/dogmatic matters, which are to be settled in pan-ecclesiastical conciliar manner), or in other words – the bishop was *autocephalous* (Hovorun 2017:88). This mode of organization slowly changed as the Church grew and subsequently “became part of the imperial system of the Roman Empire” (Payne 2007). The local Churches started grouping in larger entities called *Patriarchates*, thus autocephaly transformed from a property of a “local community” to a one of a “supra-community” (Hovorun 2017: 88). The Patriarchates operate as “federations” of local bishoprics and while they preserved the internal autonomy of the local bishops, these supra-structures brought about a new center of ecclesial-jurisdictional authority: the council of local bishops (*Synod*) headed by a primate – the Patriarch. In this setting, it is only the Patriarch (an equal in spiritual rank bishop, but superior in the administrative order) who is *not* accountable to any external authority, i.e., it is the patriarchal authority that became *autocephalous*, “self-headed”. The territorial coverage of the Patriarchates was for a long time shadowing the political structure of the Empire (with the exception of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem which was not a major political center) until the inception of other political entities associated with Christianity, such as the Kingdom of Kartli (Georgia) and the Bulgarian Tsardom, which obtained patriarchal statuses for the ecclesiastical organizations on their territories. The autocephaly, since, has been utilized most commonly to guarantee the “spiritual autonomy” of a given state and to legitimize its leadership (including by royal *Chrismation*, see Ulyanov 2008: 133-144). What is to be noted here is the *transfer of autocephalous agency* from the local bishop to the Patriarch (or to the archbishop/metropolitan in some later cases). The latter becomes the ultimate actor in terms of ecclesiastical authority, having only the Ecumenical Council as a higher instance. What is more, the “self-headed” bishop becomes such an ultimate actor (in all the cases since Georgia in VIII and Bulgaria in X century) because he *embodies certain particularism* beyond the simple socio-geographical division, while remaining true to Orthodox theology. For instance, in medieval times the emergent Orthodox Churches have embodied state particularisms, e.g., the Serbian Church in XIII and Russian one in

XV century. While the *state-related particularism* remained central for the organization of ecclesiological jurisdiction in modern times (e.g., the Church of Greece emerged as state executive church in 1833), *group particularism* became a key dimension (the Bulgarian Exarchate was established in 1870/1872 as *representing* the Bulgarian people, although this particularism had statehood as its aspired horizon). On a later stage, multiple particularisms transcending the simple national/nation-state identifications have marked the emergencies of ecclesiastical self-governance, including *de facto* autocephalies<sup>7</sup>, such as the ROCOR in the twentieth century, the Orthodox Church in America, the “Old Calendarist” churches in some countries, etc.

There are a few conclusions that are to be drawn from what has been thus far mentioned. First, the ultimate or “radical” in Howarth’s (2013) terms, *ecclesiastical subjectivity*, seen as unconstrained administrative-jurisdictional agency is linked, as a rule, with *episcopal authority* – the fundamental source of legitimacy of any ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Orthodoxy, that is. Second, *ecclesiastical subjectivity* comes into being through an *identification* with certain social particularism. Therefore, only a particular church could qualify as the ultimate jurisdictional ecclesiastical Subject. However, not every articulated social particularism leads automatically to an aspiration for ecclesiastical self-governance. Indeed, the most common aspirations have been linked with different language use, ethnicity, nationhood, statehood. In the final analysis, however, the former do not possess in themselves capacity to evoke an emergence of a particular(ist) church. These social particularisms are to be interpreted alternatively. Given the inherited *lack* or *incompleteness* every structure and “identity” (Howarth 2013: 161) have, including the ecclesiastical jurisdictions, the latter are externally defined by *other* objects/discourses. The social particularisms, in that sense, serve the function of “radical” or “constitutive outside” in Laclau’s and Derrida’s terms (quoted by Howarth 2013: 153-154), which enables the emergence of particular churches in situations of conceived structural *dislocation* (Howarth 2013: 162).

Given what has been mentioned earlier, it should be noted that the local bishop, and for that matter also the titular bishop, bear by definition a *frozen* subjectivity – a *potentiality*

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<sup>7</sup> Some of which are considered to be, from theological perspective, non-canonical and therefore out of *Communion*.



that can be realized even by simply omitting the name of the head of the respective autocephalous church during performance of Divine liturgy. This point, however, should not suggest some sort of bishop-centric ontological liberalism or voluntarism, but would rather propose that it is the episcopal authority that has to be – in Althusserian terms – “interpellated” (Althusser 2014: 264) via certain particularist *episteme*, as Foucault would put it, so that any particular ecclesiastical ontology could be accounted for at all. The various particularist *epistemes* are, from constructivist and poststructuralist perspective, “radically contingent” structures which a result of “intersubjective discursive construction”. Once given bishop “fails” to reproduce certain *structure*, he, by implication, identifies with and hence (re-)produces a *different* one. At this point the bishop would be already a *radical agent*, since he acts *on behalf of* a *different* structure. Whether he becomes an *autocephalous subject* depends on the nature of the object/discourse he would identify with. If the latter is part of an already established construction, the bishop would become a member of the ecclesiastical body which represents it. For instance, in 1923 the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church becomes a member of the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s jurisdiction, which as a structure represents *global Orthodoxy*<sup>8</sup>. In 1992, to give the example from this study, the Bessarabian Metropolitanate becomes a part of the RomOC, which re-presents the *Romanian World*. If the object/s of identification is/are seen as providing grounds (and legitimacy) for a *new* particularism, *independent* of existing structures, the bishop/s is/are enabled to *overcome* previous structural determinations, simultaneously discarding other potential existing alternatives. In other words – the ecclesiastical organization is thus enabled to articulate itself as a *particular church*, i.e., a church *Subject*. Power here is pivotal. The identification with a new, radical structure/discourse (or as it happens many times – with a *new old*, “authentic” one) is an act of power redistribution, not only because it is a manifestation of rejection of the previous center of authority, but also because it functions as assumption of power by the Subject itself. The articulation of new identification is simultaneously an articulation of *unjust* or *meaningless power relations* that are (to be) relinquished. In that sense, radical identification, group representation, and empowerment unfold as parallel operations forming the process of *church subjectivization*. Thus,

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<sup>8</sup> In the case of Estonia, it also represents non-Russian Orthodoxy.

antagonism often becomes constitutive for the emergence of a particular church – inasmuch as confrontation is part of the emancipation process. Here, essentially, resides the *political moment* in the Orthodox Church's jurisdictional organization – as much as and where it exists – namely in the *struggle* stemming from competing alternatives for ecclesiastical identification. The power exercised in repressing alternatives is the constitutive force that produces the new agent/structure or re-produces existing structures. The sources of such power could be manifold, including assertion (and resonance) of articulations of historical importance of the given structure, state support, international secular or ecclesiastical backing, material might, wide lay adherence, etc. What this study is emphasizes on, however, is the *production of knowledge*. The Foucauldian notion of “power-knowledge” (Foucault 1978: 98) comes here at hand, because this study would interpret jurisdictional ecclesiastical authority as enabled *through* particular knowledge and simultaneously as a re-producer of such. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction transcends cultures, states, languages, finance, historical *trajectories* and although all these factors prove to be important for its institution, in the final analysis, what really matters is *what* and *how* we *know* about them.

## **Definitions**

Up to this point multiple concepts carrying complex meanings have been used and in order to better systematize the study's vocabulary some of them would need clarification. A set of working definitions, either more functional or rather substantive, is suggested bellow, so that the grammar of the following analysis to be more lucid. It is to be noted in advance that the common denominator connecting them is not any legal or procedural framework, strict sociological or theological conceptualization, or firm historical-empirical underpinning. Rather, these working definitions are organized as a discourse-oriented inventory and typology and correspond to the practical purposes of the current study.

*Emergence.* An act or series of acts of articulation of full jurisdictional independence expressed by previously integrated in a given ecclesiastical structure episcopal authority.

Such articulation is, by implication, indivisible from the identification with a distinct – *particular* – object/discourse.

*National church* (ideal type). An ecclesiastical organization which, besides its spiritual *raison d'être*, articulates its Selfhood, explicitly or implicitly, as indivisible from the Selfhood of a given nation.

*State executive church* (ideal type). An ecclesiastical organization that is not necessarily ethnic or national in character, but which, on jurisdictional level, is linked with a given polity and more importantly – associated with its executive leadership.

*State church* or a *church in/of a state* (ideal type). An autocephalous or autonomous<sup>9</sup> ecclesiastical organization whose boundaries are made to match the borders of a given state, but which is not necessarily intimately associated with the state leadership.

*Particular church*. An ecclesiastical organization which operates *de facto* or *de jure* as autocephalous church. It is to be underlined that this study is not interested in the *formal* procurement of autocephaly as an inter-ecclesiastically recognized status, although, admittedly, this is an important aspect of ecclesiastical politics. The current account, however, would rather examine a particular *mode* of ecclesiastical practice and governance.

*Ecclesiastical Subject*. An ecclesiastical entity, led by bishop/s, which operates as a *de facto* or *de jure* autocephalous church on the basis of an identification with district object/discourse, certain social group representation, and articulation of unjust and/or

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<sup>9</sup> According to Grigorios Papathomas (2015: 436) an autonomous church is “also a territorial church that is freely administered and which settles alone its internal affairs”, but which “constitutes a part of [...] the jurisdiction of the Mother-Church”. The latter is to give the final “confirmation-validation” for the election of the former’s head. There are different degrees and legal frameworks of autonomy. The autonomous Orthodox Church in Finland under the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the autonomous Orthodox Church in Japan under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, for instance, have more or less similar levels of autonomy. However, the current ROCOR, the Estonian Orthodox Church and the Metropolitanate of Chişinău and all Moldova, among others, are not referred in the Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church as “autonomous”, but as “self-governing” – a status that has different implications. See more at <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/ustav/>. For conciseness’ sake, however, ‘autonomous church’ would be used in this study as covering all the above and similar cases.

meaningless power relations with any other structure. This process of *subjectivization* becomes possible in a state of conceived *dislocation*, i.e., in a “moment” in which the previously existing identifications are realized as no longer sustainable and therefore fail to be re-produced by the given bishop/s.

*Ecclesiastical agency.* An episcopal activity in the field of ecclesiastical jurisdiction which is articulated as an act *on behalf* of something or someone (Onuf 2013: 4). A *radical* ecclesiastical agency would be linked with activity on behalf of something or someone new and distinct, i.e., *particular*; or, as it is often the case, on behalf of something or someone old, “authentic”, an object that is “already there”, but narrated as *suppressed*.

*Ecclesiastical Selfhood.* A set of identifications articulated by given ecclesiastical entity, constellated around relatively fixed, but inherently unstable and flexible “nodal points” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 112 quoted in Howarth 2013: 193). The *particular ecclesiastical Selfhood* is a set of identifications which gravitate around a *particular (radical)* object/discourse, thus representing the nascent Self as *different* and therefore *independently meaningful*.

Given these clarifications, the main theoretical expectation could be formulated in the following fashion. The emergence of a particular Orthodox church is made possible under the conditions of conceived structural dislocation through an identification of a given ecclesiastical actor with a district object/discourse while the latter simultaneously articulates itself as an agent jurisdictionally independent of any external authority.

## **Case Selection and Historical Background**

As noted earlier, the dominant, taken-for-granted, and to a great extent implicit, interpretative model addressing the emergence of jurisdictionally independent Orthodox churches fails to make sense of multiple cases of ecclesiastical fragmentation and – importantly for this study – it fails to explain the lack of emergence of particular churches under ostensibly favorable for particularism conditions. The assumed automatic cause-effect relationship between nationhood/statehood and the emergence of particular

churches, as mentioned before, has to be problematized. The instrumentalist approaches which emphasize on the essential role that governments allegedly play in “creating” churches also prove to be far from ontologically robust. One way of exposing the insufficiencies of these analytical frameworks, and perhaps the only one, is to employ a comparative perspective.

The exposure of the contrasting paths to jurisdictional independence which the different ecclesiastical organizations have went through would demonstrate that statehood, nationhood, distinct “ethnicity”, divergent “culture”, historical “legacies”, or determined governmental policy could not, by themselves alone, or in combination, be interpreted as generalizable *causes* of ecclesiastical particularism. What is more, even on a micro level, absolutizing one or many of the aforementioned “conditions” would also be problematic. The size of the current study and, more crucially, the competence of its single author would not allow undertaking comprehensive comparative analysis of the multitude of jurisdictions in the Orthodox World. However, comparing just a few examples would, in many ways, suffice to prove that different theorization is not only possible, but necessary.

A comparison between Macedonia and Moldova as *cases*, and for that matter a comparison between any number of *national cases*, would be an analytical speculation. That is so, due to the immense complexity each of them bears, to the extent that treating them as “cases” – homogenous and stable – is in itself somewhat problematic. However, comparing the *processes* of shifts in ecclesiastical jurisdiction is the only way to account comprehensively, i.e., towards generalization, for the *emergences of particular Orthodox churches* as specific phenomena.

Macedonia, for instance, provides a paradigmatic example of ecclesiastical nationalism which, moreover, unfolded decades before the declaration of state independence of that country. Alternatively, on the territory of contemporary Moldova, including during the last circa three decades after its independence, no official motion for ecclesiastical jurisdictional independence has been recorded. A parallel analysis of the two constellations could follow, in principle, the logic of *Most Similar – Different Outcome system analysis*. Macedonia and Moldova are both predominantly Orthodox countries (Leustean et al 2014: 419 and 427), hence Orthodoxy plays and had played for centuries an important role in shaping the local cultures and identities (Roudometof 2013: 227).

Macedonia and Moldova both gained their independence in 1991 as they separated both from non-democratic, multi-national, officially atheist, self-defined as *socialist* federations. Moreover, these the societies in Macedonia and Moldova both have not had a prior modern experience of exercised sovereignty, neither political (for historical overviews, see Marinov 2013 and King 2013), nor ecclesiastical (in terms of autocephaly). Both Macedonia and Moldova experience claims for various “ownerships” coming from neighboring countries (and churches). Such have been expressed with regards to the languages (of the majorities) spoken on their territories, the cultural heritage “residing” there, the collective national belonging of their citizens’ ancestors and ultimately – claims over the jurisdiction of their current ecclesiastical structures. The territories of Macedonia and Moldova both have accommodated (willingly or unwillingly) multiple different ecclesiastical authorities throughout the recent and not so recent history. Currently, both countries have on their territories competing churches, which mutually dispute each other’s canonicity (Turcescu and Stan 2003, Živković 2018). Taking all that into consideration, Macedonia and Moldova are to be viewed as comparable, since they share multiple similarities and differ in one striking aspect. While the MacOC in Macedonia is operating already for decades as an independent church, there are no official aspirations for ecclesiastical independence in the Moldova, making the latter the only predominantly Orthodox country, in which any articulation (by anyone relevant) of an ambition of that kind has not been made.

Contemporary Macedonia and Moldova as political and ecclesiastical constellations arguably have inherited different legacies. The political and ecclesiastical heritage of the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia (twice in different ways) that shaped Macedonia, as well as the institutional legacies left in Moldova, from the Moldovan Principality as a vassal of the Sultan, the Russian Empire, Romania, and from the Soviet Union respectively, admittedly have structural implications on the overall dynamics in the two constellations. As argued earlier, however, none of these implications has *in themselves* the capacity to determine the direction of the processes that develop in Macedonia and Moldova. Rather, the cultural and institutional legacies that the ecclesiastical structures “inherit” are history – and *history is what churches make of it*, to rephrase Alexander Wendt’s (1992) line.

That being said, this study does not aim to compare Macedonia and Moldova as fixed categories and not even as *cases* of different, presumably homogeneous and stable in themselves, ecclesiastical-jurisdictional networks caused by, say, geopolitical clashes, ethnic diversity etc. Alternatively, the current account – stepping inevitably on previous research that has treated Orthodox jurisdictional organization as indivisible from (inter)state politics – aims to provide a new point of view, without necessarily discarding the national, state, and instrumentalist aspects of the matter. In that sense, Macedonia and Moldova are viewed in the following analysis as *containers* of *processes*. What this study is interested in, after all, are the *processes* of emergence of particular churches. In both Macedonia and Moldova recent shifts in ecclesiastical governance have happened, i.e., alterations in church jurisdiction have taken place. These shifts occurred under the conditions of similar *dislocatory events* (Howarth 2013: 161) such as the establishment of the Macedonian Republic in the Yugoslav Federation after WWII (parallel to the establishment of the Moldovan republic in USSR) and the independence of the Republic of Moldova in 1991 (parallel to the independence of the Republic of Macedonia) and yet, the outcomes were different.

Under comparable circumstances, two similar constellations have accommodated different *results*. Similarly different, however, in comparison to Moldova (taken as “case of deviation”), were also the modes of ecclesiastical governance in Ukraine and Estonia after 1992 (for an overview, see Payne 2007). Why then not to compare them instead? The crucial difference, *inter alia*, is that the Ukrainian and Estonian *national* ecclesiastical structures have continuously operated abroad (“in exile”) during the Cold war. This circumstance provides a qualitatively different starting point for the post-independence developments in these former Soviet republics. In Macedonia, alternatively, the establishment of modern national church was undertaken “from scratch” – an *expected* outcome (if one follows the dominant interpretative model) in independent Moldova.

The *units of comparison* of the following analysis are the *identity construction processes* of four different ecclesiastical organizations grouped in two pairs of “identity encounters”. These are the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MacOC) which declared itself autocephalous in 1967, the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric (OOA) which was established under SerOC’s jurisdiction after the failed Niš Agreement (2002), the Metropolitanate of

Chişinău and all Moldova (MCM) which was granted a status of “self-governing Church” under the jurisdiction of Moscow Patriarchate in 1991, and the Bessarabian Metropolitanate (BM) which was established as an autonomous part of Romanian Orthodox Church in Moldova (RomOC) in 1992. How these four processes have constituted two divergent constellations of ecclesiastical governance in the respective constellations is the central focus of the current study.

How are these processes studied, however, in terms of comparison? Lane Hansen (2006: 68) suggests three categories of study models based on the *choice of Selves*: “Comparative-Selves study”, “Single-Self study”, and “Discursive encounter”. Following this pattern, the research at hand can be defined as a “hybrid” one: a *comparative discursive-encounter study*.

Coming back to the case selection, in principle it should be possible to argue that comparing *any* number of processes of ecclesiastical identity construction should make theoretical sense and moreover, that such comparison should be able to prove correct the theoretical expectation developed in the previous chapter. Since one of the purposes of this study is to engage in discussion, however, it would be beneficial to compare processes that fit the analytical framework which this study is aiming to overcome. In that sense, comparing Macedonia and Moldova here is, at least in part, a deliberate speculation, the purpose of which is to expose the insufficiency of state-centric “case” analyses. At the same time such approach, designed as a comparison between “constellations” knitted of processes, could demonstrate the analytical potential of the suggested theory and method.

In order to proceed with further elaboration on the methodology of this study, as well as to present its method, it would be useful to briefly introduce the context and the historical background of the aforementioned processes.



## Historical Context: Macedonia

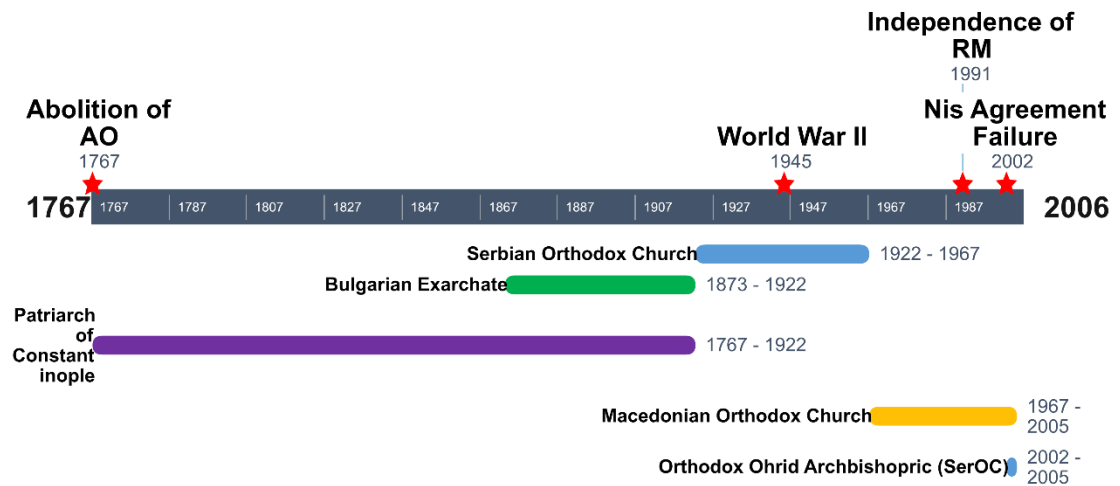


Figure 1. Timeline Macedonia

The territory of modern-day Macedonia became part of the Serbian kingdom in the aftermath of the Balkan wars (1912-1913) and the concurrent dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. After a short period during WWI when Bulgaria gained control over the territories in question, the latter were incorporated in the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The ecclesiastical borders were also continuously reshaped. The Patriarchate of Constantinople was in full control of the church jurisdiction in what is today Republic of North Macedonia since the abolition of the Ohrid Archbishopric in 1767. That changed with the emergence of the Bulgarian Exarchate (1870-1872) which was considered uncanonical by Constantinople and remained officially unrecognized by any other autocephalous Church until 1945. By 1874 the Exarchate already controlled various eparchies in Ottoman Macedonia and remained for a few decades a significant ecclesiastical (and socio-political) actor in the region, competing extensively with the “Ecumenical” Patriarchate and, at times, with the Serbian Church. After the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918 and the subsequent fusion of the

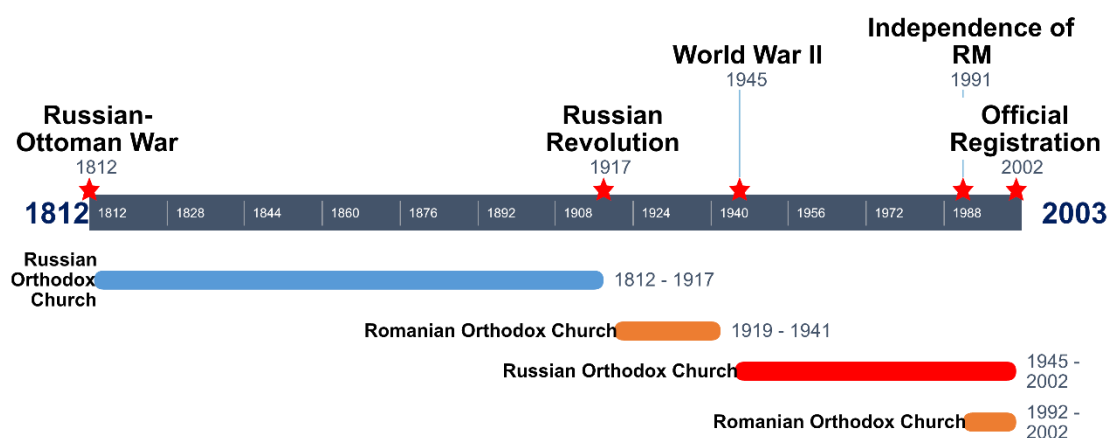
Patriarchate<sup>10</sup> of Karlovci (the Orthodox Church in the Habsburg Empire), the Metropolitanate of Belgrade, and the Metropolitanate of Montenegro into a single Serbian Orthodox Church, the latter was granted status of *Patriarchate* by the Patriarchate of Constantinople (1920). In 1922 the head of the latter, as the *canonical* holder of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Macedonia, issued a *tomos* by which he transferred the Macedonian eparchies to the authority of Belgrade (Ilievski 2012). During WWII the Bulgarian church once again included into its ecclesiastical administration territories of modern-day Macedonia. After the War and the establishment of Macedonian republic within the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, the growing local aspirations for establishment of a *Macedonian* church coincided with the tensions between the government in Belgrade and the Serbian Orthodox Church. After extensive negotiations between ecclesiastical representatives of Skopje and Belgrade and following the decisions of the Second Popular-Ecclesiastical Assembly held in Ohrid in 1958, whereby “the re-activation of the Ohrid Archbishopric” was announced, in 1959 the ecclesiastical structures in Macedonia were recognized as an autonomous entity within the Serbian Patriarchate’s jurisdiction. As the autonomous Church in Macedonia consolidated and the number of its bishops grew, following also tensions with the Serbian high clergy, the Third Popular-Ecclesiastical Assembly (1967) proclaimed the *Macedonian Orthodox Church* autocephalous. Soon the Serbian Holy Synod announced that it considers the self-declared autocephalous church in Macedonia schismatic. In 1991 Macedonia declared independence from Yugoslavia and around two years later became a member of the UN by the name “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. In 2002, following a few years of negotiations, members of the Synods of the SerOC and the MacOC signed in Nis, southern Serbia, a “Draft Agreement on Establishing Church Unity”. The document “envisaged” the MacOC “as autonomous Archbishopric of Ohrid” within the SerOC’s jurisdiction “as was basically the solution from 1958/59” (Živković 2018). However, the agreement’s ratification by the Macedonian Synod failed. As a result, the metropolitan of Povardie Jovan Vraniskovski signed alone an agreement for “church unity” with SerOC, thus separating from the structures of MacOC. Subsequently he was charged with

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<sup>10</sup> The exact rank/status of the Orthodox Church in the Habsburg Empire could be disputed, but since it operated as an independent Church and it was commonly referred to as a Patriarchate - I designate it as such, following, among others, Leustean (2018).

“inciting religious or ethnic hatred”<sup>11</sup> and was imprisoned for several months. While dealing with the Macedonian authorities, bishop Jovan was confirmed by the Patriarchate in Belgrade firstly as an exarch of Ohrid and then as an archbishop of Ohrid and metropolitan of Skopje (2005) and recognized as a head of the “re-established” within SerOC’s jurisdiction autonomous *Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric*. This ecclesiastical organization remains officially unrecognized by the Macedonian authorities and supported only by a marginal number of lay people.

### *Historical Context: Moldova*



*Figure 2. Timeline Moldova*

Following the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812, the eastern part of the Principality of Moldavia (a vassal to the Ottoman Empire state) was incorporated into the Russian Empire. The previously controlled by the Patriarchate of Constantinople ecclesiastical

<sup>11</sup> US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor: “International Religious Freedom Report 2007” <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2007/90187.htm>

structures in the territories east of Prut<sup>12</sup> were subsequently placed under the jurisdiction of the Russian Holy Synod, not without a protest from the former. Later, in 1918 when most of the territory of present-day Republic of Moldova came under the rule of the Romanian kingdom, the local eparchies were integrated into the Romanian Orthodox Church. In 1927 the church structures in Bessarabia, as it was called back then, were elevated into a rank of Metropolitanate, thus granted a degree of autonomy within the relatively decentralized Romanian Orthodox Church. Following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet Union annexed Bessarabia and shortly after the Russian Orthodox Church was put in charge over the respective territories. During the WWII, the RomOC once again gained control over Bessarabia, this time expanding its jurisdiction to what is called today *Transnistria* (and beyond). After the War and the establishment of the *Moldovan Socialist Soviet Republic* within USSR, the local ecclesiastical structures one more were joined into the jurisdiction of RusOC. In 1991 the Moscow Patriarchate raised the rank of the Church in Moldova to a Metropolitanate and according to the current Statue of former, the latter has a status of a “Self-governing Church” along with the Estonian and Latvian Orthodox Churches<sup>13</sup>. The head of the *Metropolitanate of Chişinău and all Moldova*, however, is since 2000, a permanent member of the Holy Synod of the RusOC, unlike the metropolitans of Tallinn and Riga. Going back to the beginning of the 1990’s, the newly ordained (personally by the Russian Patriarch) bishop of the Orthodox Church in Moldova Petru Păduraru, following serious tensions with other members of the local clergy soon challenged Moscow’s ecclesiastical authority in the country. The antagonism between bishop Petru and the rest of the Moldovan hierarchs (backed by various secular forces) came as a result of his “increasingly pro-Romanian stance” (Turcescu and Stan 2003). The background of this development were the relatively popular in Moldova back then aspirations for political unification with Romania, as well as the separatist motions in Transnistria and Gagauzia. In September 1992, bishop Petru and his followers announced the establishment of an autonomous *Bessarabian Metropolitanate* referring to

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<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, the Archbishopric of Ohrid was in charge of the church structures in that region for more than a century following the fall of Constantinople. Later, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, following the dissolution of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, resumed its control over these territories and in fact provided significant degree of autonomy to the church structures north of Danube. (see more in: Iorga 1908)

<sup>13</sup> Statue of the Russian Orthodox Church <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/ustav/xii/>

the interwar ecclesiastical structure that had its jurisdiction between Prut and Dniester. In December same year the Romanian Orthodox Church recognized the BM and “received it under its jurisdiction” (idem). It took circa ten years, however, for the Moldovan state to officially recognize the Bessarabian Metropolitanate. Only after a decision of the European Court of Human Rights in 2001, the Moldovan government registered (mid-2002) the ecclesiastical organization led by bishop Petru. According to the 2011 Gallup survey on religion<sup>14</sup> the belonging ratio of the Orthodox Christians in Moldova is 86 percent to the MCM and 13 percent to the BM.

## Methodology and Method

Now that the historical background has been presented, the study is to proceed with an elaboration on the details of the analysis as such. How are the *processes of identification* examined? The identity construction of the Macedonian Orthodox Church is analyzed *per se*, since this ecclesiastical organization operates *de facto* as an autocephalous church. Alternatively, the identifications of MacOC’s rival – the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric that was established in 2002-2005 – are examined as analytically inseparable from its “patron” – the Serbian Orthodox Church. That does not mean that the OOA and the SerOC do not have differences in their general discourses. Regarding the construction of the *Selfhood discourse* of the former (and by implication of its *counter-Selfhood discourse* vis-à-vis MacOC), however, these “speakers” only complement each other. Similarly, the discourse of the Bessarabian Metropolitanate and the one of the Romanian Orthodox Church should be studied as *one* when it comes to constructing the identity of the first (naturally, vis-à-vis its rival – the Metropolitanate of Chişinău and all Moldova). The MCM’s discourse, likewise, is analytically coupled with the one of the RusOC.

Following Lane Hansen’s (2006: 37) analytical suggestions for studying Selfhood, the account at hand undertakes discourse analysis. More precisely, it analyzes *identity construction* as constituted of various discursive operations of *linking* and *differentiation*.

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted in US Department of Justice, Executive Office for Immigration Review: “Moldova 2015 International Religious Freedom Report” <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/file/884916/download>

These operations, expressed through “series of signs” is what is studied as *the means of* building and stabilizing constructions of different *Selves*. From poststructuralist perspective, such constructions are treated, as inherently unfixed and open, since what makes of the Self – a Self is located outside of it. Analytically that means the identity constructions of the ecclesiastical actors in question are not isolated endogenous processes and, what is more, their identities are ontologically intertwined in larger structures of meaning. The four identity constructions in question are interpreted, hence, as an ever-evolving *processes*, which only temporarily constrain and/or enable the respective actors to operate in certain modalities.

Following Hansen further, the key analytical choices that have been made are hereby presented. These are the selection of *discourses*, *Selves*, and *events* to study.

The *Selfhood discourses* articulated by the four aforementioned organizations have already been identified as fundamental, or in Hansen’s (2006: 46) words – as “basic discourses”. That means they articulate (within their couples and, in a different way, within the larger discursive field) diverging identifications with various spatial and temporal objects/structures. In addition, they often offer contrasting interpretations of what *ethical* conduct should look like. This study is focused mostly on the Selfhood discourses produced by the four organizations themselves, not because they are considered to be completely independent from the broader representations of ecclesiastical Selfhood (articulated by political actors, state institutions, and other ecclesiastical subjects *inter alia*), but also because of the practical limitations of the format. What is more important methodologically, the aforementioned broader field, taken as “discursive structures”, is considered *sedimented* into the Selfhood discourses in question. Notwithstanding the larger intersubjective discursive frameworks, the central *locus* of radical Self-production is to be found in the discourses produced by the *Selves* as such. For this study, therefore, it is sufficient to examine the discourses of the four ecclesiastical organizations, since they are inevitably saturated with the different confirmations, contestations, and/or suppressions exercised exogenously. These discourse are expected, hence, to demonstrate the constitutive relationship between different modes of Self-representation and the emergence/lack of ecclesiastical particularism.

With regards to the *choice of Selves* (Hansen 2006: 67), the comparative focus on these particular two couples of organizations is based on their “political pregnancy” (idem). There are more than two (claiming to be Orthodox) ecclesiastical organizations in both Macedonia and Moldova, but the selection of the MacOC and the OAO on one hand and of the MCM and the MB on the other, is made not simply because of some “tangible” prevalence of these structures in the respective spaces (in terms of number of followers or possession of physical property, etc.), but because they are *politically and societally relevant*, i.e., they are perceived as important beyond their immediate significance as confessional structures. In other words – the jurisdictional dynamics of these organizations are in mutually constitutive relationship with the political dynamics in the respective *loci*.

The events, which this analysis is looking at, or the *number of events* in Hansen’s (2006: 71) terms, has been mentioned earlier but here they are presented together from methodological perspective. What all the “events” have in common is that they signify occurrences of rivalry and conflict in given fields of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. These are “moments” in which Selfhood discourses are produced and/or re-produced with the highest possible intensity. The event of emergence of MacOC in 1967 is chronologically the first instance of such occurrence within the times and the spaces this study examines. Similarly, the establishment of the Bessarabian Metropolitanate in 1992 has inflicted a struggle for the ecclesiastical jurisdiction in and of the respective territory. The formation of the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric after the failure of the Niš Agreement in 2002, as well as the very failure of the Agreement itself, signify events that kindled, once again, the tensions between the SerOC and the MacOC.

A research on the emergence of particular churches could only benefit from genealogical trace of the articulations of different identities and the evolution of the respective representations. In such research, applied to Macedonia and Moldova, one could trace the processes of identity construction back to much earlier “dislocatory events” (Howarth 2000). With regards to the processes in Macedonia, such are the emergence of the Bulgarian Exarchate (1870), the Ilinden Uprising (1903), WWII and the formation of Yugoslavia as a federation. As for the processes in Moldova, genealogical tracing would focus on the annexation of Bessarabia by the Russian Empire (1912), the Russian Revolution (1917) and the Romanian unification in 1918, as well as WWII again and the

establishment of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. These events all had impact on the dynamics of ecclesiastical identification and an analysis on the discourses produced in those times could only enrich the research. However, the current study focuses on the more recent developments due to the limitations of the format and more importantly, from an analytical point of view, because these contemporary developments provide sufficient grounds for discursive examination. What is more, this study engages in *synchronic* analysis, rather than a *diachronic* one. Although the hereby suggested discourse analysis stretches over a relatively long period of time, especially with regards to Macedonia, the purpose of this analysis is not necessarily to demonstrate how given identifications and representations have developed throughout the decades, but rather to examine the discourses in their relatively stable “doings”. That is to say – how these discourses construct agents and what kind of subjectivity is enabled thus for them.

With regards to *selection of material* for the analysis, this study follows the suggestion of Dunn and Neumann (2016: 94) which is to focus on “canonical texts” or “texts-monuments”, texts that have “broad reception and are often cited” (idem) these are. The main corpus of material for this analysis is composed of official statements made by the organizations in question, speeches delivered and interviews given by their leaders, as well as strictly official documents such as Church Statutes (Constitutions), Decisions, and Resolutions. Official correspondence between ecclesiastical and other institutions – when it is publicly available – also meets Lane Hansen’s (2006: 74) criteria: “clear articulation”, “widely read”, and produced from a position of “formal authority”. The key criteria for choosing the concrete texts for the analysis is their use of key words and references related with jurisdiction, church-state relations, nationhood and statehood, inter-ecclesiastical relations, ecclesiastical governance’s history, etc.

The main collection of material has been made on site, in the national libraries in Skopje and Chişinău. The main sources whereby the aforementioned texts were found are the official church newspapers of the ecclesiastical organizations in question<sup>15</sup>. A

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<sup>15</sup> The *Macedonian Orthodox Church*’s newspaper is *Sluzhben list* (in Macedonian: Службен лист); all the editions from 2002 to 2005 were surveyed. Earlier texts (from the period around 1967) were found elsewhere among the mentioned sources.



considerable share of the documents was already collected in special documentary editions such as “Adevărul despre Mitropolia Basarabiei” (from Romanian: “The truth about the Metropolitanate of Bessarabia”) (Romanian Patriarchate 1993) and “Автокефалноста на Македонската православна црква (документи)” (from Macedonian: “The Autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Documents”) (Mojanoski 2004). The official websites of the four ecclesiastical organizations also have provided valuable archives of documents, statements, interviews, etc.<sup>16</sup>. With regards to timeframe, the exact periods of discursive investigation are: 1966-1967 and 2002-2005 for the constellation Macedonia and 1992-2002 for the constellation Moldova. The pool of textual material used for the study consists of roughly 100 textual entities, or circa 150 000 words.

With respect to the substance of the analysis, this study follows, again, Lane Hansen’s approach. Identity construction processes are, Hansen (2006: 33) argues, “always spatially, temporary and ethnically situated”. These three *dimensions* of identity construction constitute, in effect, the basic structure of the current study’s analysis. The analysis of the *spatial dimensions* of the given Selfhood discourses focuses, in general terms, on the mapping of the Self and the Other and the spatial relation between them, as well as on the articulations that delineate the boundaries of authority and jurisdiction. The scrutiny of the *temporal dimension* accounts for the linking and differentiation of the Self and the Other with different objects/subjects in the past (based on *continuity*, *repetition*, *stasis*, or interruption), as well as for the articulated representations of *present* and *future*.

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The *Metropolitanate of Bessarabia*’s newspaper is *Alfa și Omega* (in Romanian); all the editions from 1995 (when the newspaper was established) to 2002 were surveyed. Official documents of the MB, announcements, and statements were published in the political newspapers *Țara* and *Moldova Suverană* in the period 1992-1995, which were also reviewed

The *Metropolitanate of Chișinău and all Moldova*’s newspaper is *Curierul Ortodox* (in Romanian); all the editions between 1995 (when the newspaper was established) and 2002 were probed. Earlier texts were found elsewhere among the abovementioned sources.

<sup>16</sup> The online archive of OOA <http://www.poa-info.org/history> contains practically all the relevant for its part texts, starting from the Niš Agreement to the current day; all the texts dating from 2002 to 2005 were surveyed. Many of the latter are translated officially in English and when parts of them are quoted here the original English text is used. Texts produced by SerOC in the period around 1967 found elsewhere among the mentioned sources.

The examination of the *ethical dimension* engages with analysis of the competing constructions of *responsibility* and *norms* in various contested categories such as *canonical order*, *justice*, *appropriateness* etc. The interrogation of the ways the four organizations locate themselves and the Others in these three dimensions shall demonstrate how certain possibilities for these actors are being disclosed or how given limitations to their actions have been constructed.

The analysis of the identified four Selfhood discourses is structured in four separate sections. For each of the discourses – and in each section, the three aforementioned dimensions – spatial, temporal, and ethical – are examined. The scrutiny is undertaken in comparative fashion: firstly, in terms of intra-couple “discursive encounter” and secondly, in the conclusions section, as an inter-couple comparison. Within the three-dimensional analysis, a few additional analytical tools inspired by or directly borrowed from Dunn and Neumann’s account on discourse analysis (2016: 103-124) are employed. One of them is to identify and to “de-construct” the articulated *presuppositions*. That means that the *background knowledge constrictions* which discourses implicitly produce are exposed and interpreted in terms of their practical implications. In addition, the discursive operations which *naturalize* certain cause-effect relationships and/or assert given *teleological* paradigms, as well as the ones that directly construct *truth claims* are also investigated. *Metaphorical* and *metonymical analysis*, or the identification of series of objects and “phenomena referring to each other” in various ways, including references to historical and religious phenomena is as well undertaken when needed. *Subject positioning* as a series of articulations of “parallels and contrasts” to other subjects is another discursive element that is taken into consideration, because of its function to limit or to allow options for action.

The analysis of all these discursive operations aims to disclose the constitutive relationship between Selfhood construction and subjectivity. “[T]he Self is constituted through the delineation of Others, and the Other can be articulated as superior, inferior, or equal”, Hansen (2006: 68) argues. It is precisely in the representations of power relations whereby this study considers the different modes of ecclesiastical governance to be constituted in. Now that the methodological framework has been delineated, the study is to continue with the analysis.

## Results and Discussion

### *Macedonian Orthodox Church's Selfhood Discourse*

#### *A few remarks*

The Macedonian Orthodox Church's Selfhood discourse did not appear out of nowhere in 1966-1967. Already in 1945 there were institutional voices to articulate a "need for ecclesiastical independence" of the Orthodox Church in Macedonia (Ilievski 2012: 134). There is also evidence that the idea for a self-governing church was not absent even in Ottoman Macedonia (Marinov 2013: 287-288). However, as it was already argued, particularist discourse in Orthodoxy gains robust ecclesiastical (and socio-political) relevance only when it is systematically (re-)produced from a position of episcopal authority. In that sense, a development of the latter sort can be traced in Macedonia only from the 1950s when the bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church Dositej started to openly articulate separate Macedonian ecclesiastical Selfhood. That process peaked when the autonomous (since 1959) MacOC, led by bishop Dositej, declared autocephaly in 1967. Various sources dating from the period prior to 1967 have been examined throughout the process of collection and processing of textual material for this study. However, the current analysis undertakes close examination of texts mostly dating from the declaration of autocephaly. That would be so, not only due to practical reasons related with the volume of the current format, but also because there have not been encountered dramatically different representations in the earlier texts. The Selfhood discourse from and after 1966-1967 had only become more assertive and antagonistic. These representations have remained rather stable also in the period of the establishment of the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric, with minor changes reflecting the sovereign status of the Republic of Macedonia. In the following paragraphs the Selfhood discourse of MacOC is examined as an *analytical snapshot* – an overlay image combining the picture from 1966-1967 and the one from 2002-2005.

#### *Spatial Dimension of the MacOC's Selfhood Discourse*

The delineation of the spatial boundaries of the Macedonian Orthodox Church has itself two main dimensions. The first one is based on the stretch of the People's Republic of Macedonia, or what it was later called Socialist Republic of Macedonia, as this entity was

outlined within the Yugoslav Federation. Within this dimension, the boundaries remained the same also after 1991 as the sovereign Republic of Macedonia or “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” inherited the same territory. With that, the stability of the border-drawing exercise for MacOC comes to an end. The second *ethno-political dimension* of the special representation of the church opens its territorial framework practically to the whole world. Unlike the *geopolitical dimension* described above, the ethnic one is admittedly flexible and open. As Article 12 of the “Statue of the Macedonian Orthodox Church”<sup>17</sup> suggests:

“Besides the mentioned eparchies, separate eparchies for the Macedonian Orthodox believers abroad could be organized, given that there are conditions for [such organization] (in America, Canada, Australia, etc.).” (Macedonian Orthodox Church, *Statue 1959*, Mojanoski 2004: 56)

Such discursive articulation is repeatedly reproduced in MacOC’s discourse and it involves various levels of meaning-construction. First, it creates a background knowledge for an existence of a specific ethnic group, a group *different* vis-à-vis other ethnicities, that is. Second, it implies that it is a *responsibility* of a *national church* to administrate the ecclesiastical life of the *nationals* abroad, i.e., it advances transnationalization of jurisdiction. Third, it does clearly map *outside* and *inside*, thus designating Macedonia as an (or *the*) *ethnic space* of the Macedonians. These meanings seem to be taken as rather self-evident today, but by the 1950s such *knowledge* was far from a “system of truth”, to put it again in Foucauldian terms (Foucault 2012: 29).

The mapping of the Macedonian Orthodox Church establishes a spatial differentiation between Macedonia as an ecclesiastical space and everyone else, especially Serbia. What is more, it also differentiates the Macedonians as a separate “flock” regardless of their residence. In addition, this mapping links the Macedonian church with the Macedonian state as coinciding spaces, because of their shared *ethnic* Macedonian character. Article 3 of the “Decision for the Proclamation of the Autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church” is explicit in that respect:

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<sup>17</sup> This version of the Statue is from 1958 when the MacOC was unilaterally proclaimed as autonomous. In 1959 the document was accepted by the SerOC with some amendments.

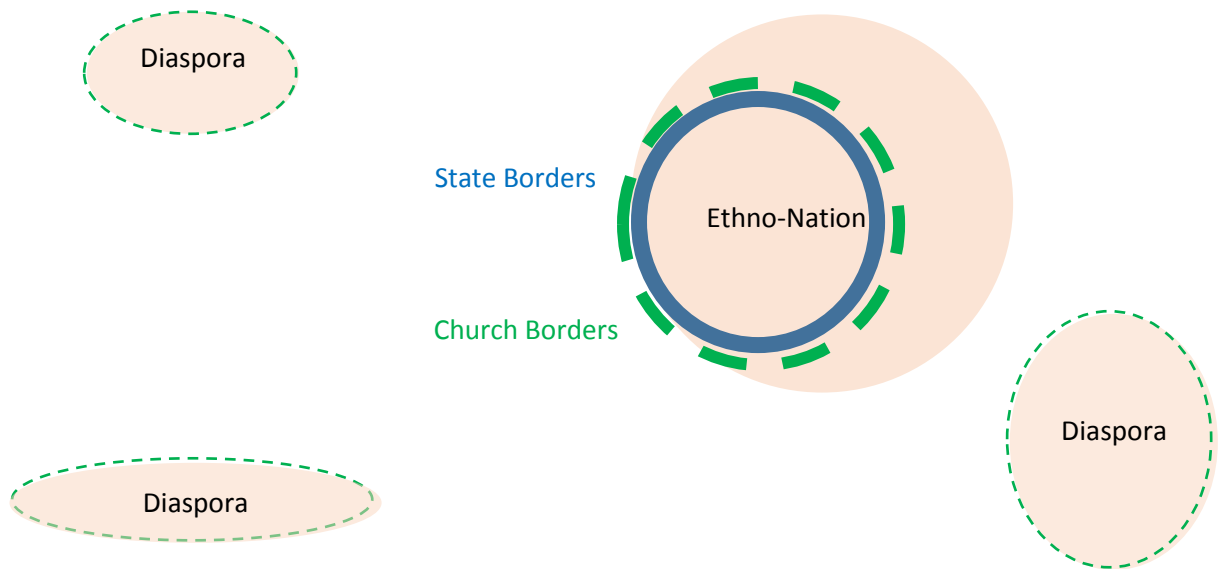
“The diocese of the autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church overlaps with the borders of the Macedonian nation-state – Socialist Republic of Macedonia” (Macedonian Orthodox Church, *Decision 1967*, Mojanoski 2004: 352)

Somewhere in the intersection between the spatial and the temporal dimension are the representations of the Archbishopric of Ohrid as a historical object/subject. More about the linking of the MacOC with its alleged ancestor would be said in the next section, but here one can review the spatial representation of the historical Archbishopric in MacOC’s discourse.

“The Archbishopric of Ohrid as an autocephalous Orthodox Church on the territory of today’s state of the Macedonian people [народ] has existed [...] [for] around 800 years. [It has] supported in difficult times *also* the neighboring orthodox peoples”. (italics mine) (idem)

The meaning of “territory” is constructed as a category of space *belonging to someone* and that – in the case of Macedonia – is the homonymous *nation*. Moreover, this belonging is *primordialized* through the representation of the Archbishopric’s long existence, during which it had interactions *other* peoples, *different than the Macedonians* these are. In that sense, the Archbishopric of Ohrid is not only represented as a church which existed on the current Macedonian territory, but as a church *of* the Macedonian ethnos. The latter belongs to given geographic area and that *area*, in a sense, belongs to it, as the discursive logic projects. Thus, a spatio-temporal link is established between the MacOC and the Archbishopric of Ohrid, a link which legitimizes the current existence of “the church of the Macedonians” as a *separate* church. As every discourse, the mapping discourse of MacOC is inevitably open. Archbishop Stefan, in his address on the occasion of the consecration of the Monastery of Saint Clement in Plaoshnik had said: “the Archbishopric of Ohrid [is] the Mother-Church of the Macedonian nation [народ] and of all the Orthodox [believers] who live on our space [простори] (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben List 2002b: 5-9). Although the “Macedonian territory” (in this case not necessarily just the space within the contemporary borders of the Republic) is a land that belongs namely to the Macedonians as an *ethnic group*, the Macedonian church is open to all Orthodox believers regardless of their *ethnicity*. Such representation moves MacOC closer to an “ecumenical” outlook and destabilizes its ethno-national fixity. Nonetheless,

from a certain perspective, such “openness” could be seen as functioning precisely in order to delineate or to point at the relative discursive stability, which gives the church an *ethnic* meaning.



*Figure 3. Spaces and borders of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, schematic representation*

Whereas the discourse of the Macedonian Orthodox Church makes it open to laypeople of different origin, it is categorically closed to “external” people when it comes to its *governance*: “[T]his nation [народ] – in the current times of complete ecclesial-national freedom – cannot listen [obey] anymore to foreign pastors, nor to [obey] foreign leaders!” (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben List 2002a: 2-4). Such *othering* has clear spatial denotation, but understood in its boarder context, the differentiation could be interpreted as implying *ethnic* connotation as well. The church and the polity are linked once again – this time directly with a dash – as two *sides of the national (ethnic)* “freedom”. “Freedom” as a *floating signifier* (Laclau and Mouffe 2014: 129) also has a spatial dimension. It is stabilized in MacOC’s discourse *qua* exercise of power in a given *space* by a given *territorial* actor.

The Selfhood discourse of the MacOC reproduces one very common representation in the modern Orthodox ecclesiology and that is the equivalence of *autocephalous Church* and *local Church*. Why that has not always been the case and why this representation is contestable, has been briefly discussed earlier, but what is to be noted here is the construction of relationship between *space* and *power*. What constitutes *the locality* in the discourse of the modern *national/local church* is the space of a polity which binds given territories together. The MacOC systematically relates itself to other “local Churches” thus constructing a *local church* of its own. The deductive reasoning *state = locality = canonical territory* stemming from the discursive drawing of an inter-ecclesial/inter-national map complements the inductive logic of *ethnos = particular ecclesial community = church*. Precisely in that sense, the popular metaphor “sister church” has been utilized in MacOC’s discourse with regards to the Serbian Orthodox Church. This shared *sisterhood* is linking MacOC and the SerOC by implying *equality* between them in terms of power and rank *and* simultaneously operates as differentiation, since the sororal relationship between any two churches presupposes their spatial *distinction*.

#### *Temporal Dimension of MacOC’s Selfhood Discourse*

History, memory and past are some of the most privileged representations in the MacOC’s discourse. A great share of the legitimacy of the MacOC as a particular church relies – in its own understanding – on its articulation as a *decedent* of the medieval Archbishopric of Ohrid. The linking of MacOC with the historical Archbishopric is among the most stable discursive fixities in the Macedonian church’s discourse and it provides grounds for differentiating it from other (neighboring) churches, in MacOC’s view – “decedents” of *other* historical ecclesiastical subjects these are.

The past of the Archbishopric of Ohrid is represented not only as “glorious”, but – perhaps even more importantly – as *remembered*. It is the “the living memory” for the “fount of the European Christianization and civilization” (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben List 2002b: 5-9) that sustained the “ceaseless fight” for an “independent” church in Macedonia “ever after” the “illegal abolition” (*Documents*, Mojanoski 2004: 363) of the Archbishopric “by the Sultan”. The *restoration* sign’s meaning is constructed on the basis of the naturalized *continuity paradigm* which posits that the MacOC as Subject embodies the legacy of the

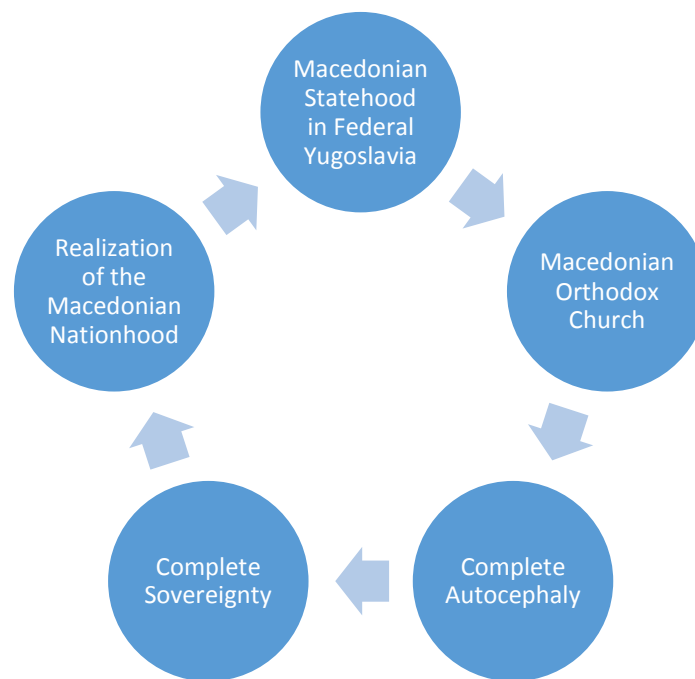
“ancient church of Ohrid”. What is more, the MacOC ceased – with its emergence – the “multi-centennial struggle” (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben List 2002a: 2) for an “ecclesiastical freedom [...] as for it every Orthodox Macedonian has continuously prayed ever since the abolition of the autocephalous Ohrid Archbishopric (Macedonian Orthodox Church, *Resolution 1967*, Mojanoski 2004: 351).

The Macedonian Orthodox Church’s discourse constructs the Archbishopric of Ohrid as its *past Self*, through which it is connected by *territory* and *memory* (and by *blood*, if one is to re-construct further the ethnic discourse). The *past Self* is represented as a “victim” and as such is also depicted *the Macedonian people* which had to experience multiple “tragedies that have occurred in the [...] past [...] ever since of the abolition of the Ohrid Archbishopric” (idem). This taken-for-granted cause-effect relationship is pivotal, because it suggests that only through “restoration” of the Church, prosperity for *the people* could be achieved. The *historical victimhood*, or as it is often represented – the collective “martyrdom”, links, once again, the *Macedonian nation* to “its” church as the two are depicted as “always being together” in the “sufferings” of the past. What separates the *past* from the *present* is the “revival” of the Macedonian *state*. Only *qua state* the *Macedonian nation* can be “free” politically and, by implication, ecclesiastically. The *present Self* is differentiated against the past *non-Self*, or better said – from the latent, frozen, and unfree *past Self*. In addition, the “double struggle” discourse makes of the revolutionaries – martyrs for the ecclesiastical freedom and of the “people’s clergymen” (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben list 2004b: 86) – fighters for national liberty. If the church is “a holy guardian and a protector of the Macedonian spirit, way of life [бит] and existence” (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben List 2002a: 2) *and* the establishment of a Macedonian nation state is a “condition” for the restoration of the “ancient church”, then the three *hypostases* – Church, Ethnos, and State – are to be conceived as constitutive for the representation of the *one* national Subject.

With regards to the state *hypostasis*, MacOC’s discourse from 1966-1967 articulates the establishment of the unit *Macedonia* within Federal Yugoslavia as a “restoration” of *the* Macedonian statehood. Interestingly enough, later in the 2000s Archbishop Stefan asserts: “haven’t we had resorted the Church in 1967, it is questionable whether we would have had restored the state in 1991” (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben List 2002a: 4) This *prima facie* controversy is stabilized by the representations of *completeness* and



*incompleteness*. MacOC's discourse systematically constructs teleological models for a predetermined evolvement of church and state. The Orthodox Church's mode of jurisdiction in Macedonia between 1959 and 1967 is represented retroactively as "autocephaly", albeit "limited" (Macedonian Orthodox Church, *Decision 1967*, Mojanoski 2004: 355). Henceforth, due to its teleological "unacceptability", this incompleteness was to be "naturally" concluded. Similarly, in MacOC's discourse, the *Macedonian statehood* moved from "re-establishment" after the WWII to "complete sovereignty" in 1991, accomplishing thus its organic "historic route".



*Figure 4. The tautological relationship between nation, state and church*

Largely, the Macedonian Orthodox Church constructs a *romantic national Self* embedded in the *episteme* of Enlightenment subjectivity and empowered thus by collective national "consciousness" and "awareness". However, there are some rather ambiguous, from MacOC's primordialist perspective, transitions of the Macedonian collective *ecclesial-national Self* from states of *activity as a Subject* to states of *passivity as an object*. These states are articulated as *temporal* representations of the Self and are sustained as *meaningful* through metaphorical analogies with other types of transformations:

“A nation [народ] that wants justice has to go through its own Golgotha in order to [be able] to wait for its resurrection. Our Macedonian nation, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 1903, at the glorious Ilinden Uprising has sacrificed itself before [пред] the multi-centennial enslaver and – as the Lord Jesus Chris at Golgotha – has died in order to endure [умре за да доживее] its resurrection!” (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben list 2004b: 86)

The normative aspects of such discursive operations are discussed in the next section, but their temporal representations deserve attention at this stage. The articulation of a linear causal relationship between victimhood, sacrifice, and revival constructs a perennial Macedonian Self which is uninterruptedly “out there”, but due to independently occurring obstacles, it struggles, at times, to manifest itself. In the words of the Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church:

“The Macedonians [...] with unseen enthusiasm [...] continue the fight in order to do [to achieve] what could not have been done in the past, not because of a fault of their own, but due to the historical circumstances”. (Macedonian Orthodox Church, *Letter 1966*, Mojanoski 2004: 265)

By articulating the Macedonian *ethnos* and statehood as ancient, the MacOC’ discourse represents the *other* states and peoples as having no grounds to claim “to be parents” to the Macedonian nation (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben list 2004a: 5)

“We shall not forget that our people [народ] has had its own state already before all the contemporary states and peoples. We had [...] glorious empires from the times of Philip and Alexander of Macedon, also [we had] the Tsardom of Samuel, despotates and principalities, and a Republic – all [of them having] our Macedonian spirit and character – which led to our current existence as a nation [народ] [, which has] its own historical, cultural and ecclesiastical foundation. That is why God has placed Macedonia and the Macedonians in the content of the most holy Book [...] – the Bible and has blessed them for Golgothian sufferings, but also for a glorious resurrection and eternal life. (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben list 2004b: 86)

In this relational framework the *neighbors* have their own historical paths, which are represented as normatively fixed on the territories that “belong” to them. Even in

“unnatural” state of affairs, such as the Byzantine or the medieval Serbian rule over Macedonia, according to MacOC’s discourse, the “foreign rulers” have not “abolished the historical Archbishopric” because of the *respect* they had for “our ancient church”. The “injustice of the abolition” has been undertaken, as far as MacOC is concerned, by a non-Christian subject – the Sultan. In that sense, whoever challenges the *Macedonian autocephaly* is to be associated with the negative connotations, which the Ottoman domination brings in Balkan context.

### *Ethical Dimension of MacOC’s Selfhood Discourse*

One of the most stable normative representations in MacOC’s discourse is the one of the *church’s responsibility for the nation*. Since the ethnic group and the “flock” are virtually equated, the hierarchs of the MacOC are entitled to speak *on behalf of* the nation, creating thus background knowledge for a nationwide ecclesial affiliation. The presupposed collective religiosity of the nation *obliges* the Church to take care of it *as such*. By implication, the people is *obliged* to “hold together”, especially “in times of temptations”, such as the emergence of OOA for instance, in order to protect *its* Church, a guarantor the national identity, that is. The *securitization discourse* of MacOC with regards to its rival – the “schismatic”, “apostate” “fraction” of bishop Jovan Vranishkovski – treats the latter not only as a menace to the “autocephalous Macedonian Church”, but also as a *threat* to the state and the nation. Hence, it is MacOC’s *duty*, together with the citizens/laypeople and the state institutions, to prevent the “traitors” from gaining power. This deontological discourse transcends, in its mapping, the state borders and constructs a transnational Macedonian ethical space: “we embrace you, dear children who live outside of the Fatherland and we call you in this sacred for us moment to be together [with us] and to be as one” (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben List 2002a: 3)

In MacOC’s discourse, the source of *power in states of exception*, to put it in Agamben’s (2005) terms, lays in the *will of the people*. This democratic normativity is persistently articulated and clearly places the *locus* of emergency decision-making (for an autocephaly, for instance) on the “Ecclesial-Popular Assemblies”. This institutional manifestation of the church-nation link facilitates the unlinking of MacOC from Belgrade’s ecclesiastical authority. When MacOC’s discourse represents the interwar ecclesiastical history of Macedonia (when the Patriarchate of Constantinople handed over

the jurisdiction of several of its eparchies to SerOC), it evidently constructs such normative presupposition: “The incorporation of these eparchies has happened contrary to the canons and without the consent of the Macedonian people” (Macedonian Orthodox Church, *Decision 1967*, Mojanoski 2004: 356).

In that sense, the “Westphalian” principle of equality of nations and states finds its ecclesiastical extrapolation in MacOC’s discourse. Since the Macedonian nation is “equal to all the Yugoslavian nations” and to all other nations for that matter, it has the *right to its own church*:

“Led by the historical and canonical foundations of the Holy Orthodox Church [...] which has rich history on the territory of Macedonia, the Holy Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church expresses its deep conviction that the Macedonian people *i.e.*, the Macedonian Orthodox Church has full historical and canonical rights of an AUTOCEHPALOUS ORTHODOX CHURCH (sic).” (italics mine) (Macedonian Orthodox Church, *Letter 1966*, Mojanoski 2004: 263)

The *adherence to the canons* is among the most important signs in Orthodoxy besides the adherence to the dogmas. MacOC’s dogmatic attachment to Orthodoxy is not contested by anyone and therefore such representation does not find a prominent place in the respective Selfhood discourse (except for the self-evident linkage with the Orthodox faith in general). The *canonical order* as a sign, however, is one the key representations in MacOC’s language, due to its position in the center of the discursive encounter with SerOC/OOA. The normativity of the *canon* is systematically coupled with the one of *history*, thus creating an ethical-teleological synthesis which legitimizes the existence of MacOC as a particular national church. The particular canon that the MacOC repetitively refers to is related, not surprisingly, with *politics*:

“In its nation state [...] the liberated Macedonian people has the right of its own independent church, which in accordance to [its] national character is called Macedonian Orthodox Church, which corresponds also to the 17<sup>th</sup> rule of the IV

Ecumenical Council<sup>18</sup>” (Macedonian Orthodox Church, *Decision 1967*, Mojanoski 2004: 358).

“[The] Decision [for autocephaly] reconfirms the canonical norms that ‘the state decisions should be followed by ecclesiastical’ [ones]”. (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben List 2002b: 5)

The emergence of a *Macedonian state* not only justifies the establishment of a national church, but it also requires everyone else to *respect* the parallel border-drawing on the ecclesio-jurisdictional map:

“This historical act of restoration of the ancient Church is entirely justified also from ecclesiological and canonical aspect since it [the Church] exists in an internationally recognized state [-] Macedonia.” (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben list 2004b: 89)

*Canonicity* becomes a relational category in MacOC’s Selfhood discourse and as Archbishop Stefan says “the holy canons and the New Testament are exact and clear and [are] not a privilege of a given nation [народ], of a given Church” (*Sluzhben list* 2002a: 8). This ethical dimension of the Macedonian autocephaly is fundamental. The MacOC constructs its ethical identity on the basis of a differentiation vis-à-vis the others, because the latter unjustifiably reject its “reality” and “truth”. What is more, *injustice* is intertwined with *power*, since the lack of recognition is a result of various levels of *dominance*. This moral dimension provides grounds for linking MacOC with other *subaltern* Selves:

“Unfortunately, it is not only our Orthodox Church that has been deprived from rights in that respect. Deprived are also not a small number of other churches – or better said – the Orthodoxy is deprived, enslaved by the established and powerful local Orthodox Churches.” (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben List 2002b: 8)

It is in the name of the *universal* Orthodoxy that the MacOC claims its *particularity*. The clearly articulated *unjustified power relations* are constructed not only as an obstacle for

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<sup>18</sup> Text of the 17<sup>th</sup> Canon of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council:

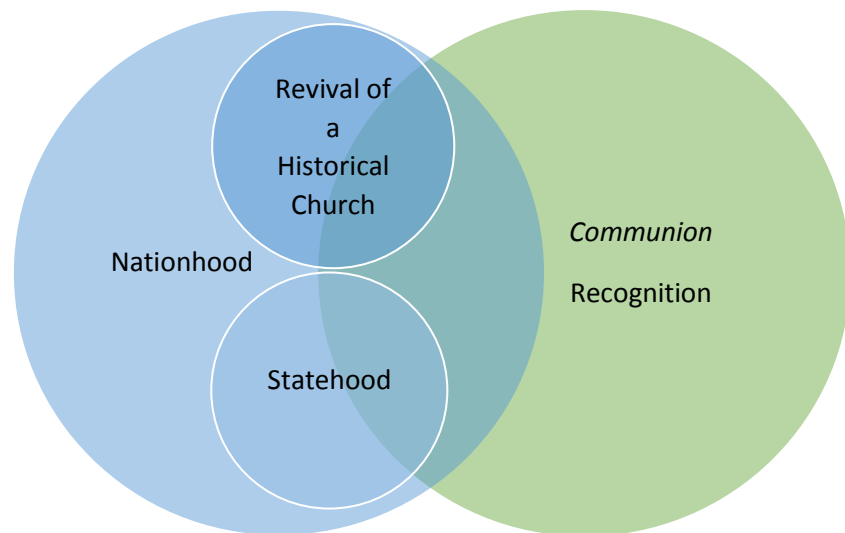
[http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0835/\\_P1L.HTM](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0835/_P1L.HTM)

the *normal* functioning of the MacOC (*in Communion* with the *Ecumene*, that is), but also as a problem for the Orthodox Church as a whole. Namely the *imperative* for *unity*, which is immanent for the Christian Church in principle, becomes one of the cornerstones of MacOC's discourse. How this sign is represented by the OOA/SerOC's discourse is discussed further, but it is important to note in this section that in MacOC's discourse *unity* is constructed as *possible* only on the basis of *equality*. In such *chain of equivalences* (Laclau and Mouffe 2014: 144), the recognition of MacOC as autocephalous would be a manifestation of "true unity", which "would [strengthen] the influence of the Holy Orthodox Church in our land and the world as a whole" (Macedonian Orthodox Church, *Letter 1966*, Mojanoski 2004: 263).

There are two "cracks" in MacOC's Selfhood discourse that deserve to be pointed out. The first one is related with the representation of the "abolition of the historical Archbishopric of Ohrid" as "illegal" and "uncanonical". If one of the key assumption is that "ecclesiastical borders should follow the political ones", then the absence of a separate state around Ohrid in 1767 makes the claim for "injustice of the abolition" (Archbishop Stefan, Sluzhben List 2002b: 5) rather ungrounded in MacOC's own terms. On an analytical note, the purpose of this exposure is not to dispute with the discourse in question, but to demonstrate its *openness* as a *structure of meaning*. This aforementioned "crack" comes to reveal that for the Macedonian national Self, as for any identity, there is no essence. The legitimacy the Macedonian eclectic Subject is based on various representations of episodes of existence of different states and churches. The latter are not necessarily related outside of MacOC's discourse and they function rather as *nodal points* of its identity.

The second "fissure" in the given discourse is to be found in its articulations of *source of legitimacy*. As already mentioned, the MacOC receives its legitimacy, ultimately, from "the will" of the *demos*. Nonetheless, given the recognized imperative for *recognition* and *Communion* applicable for every Orthodox Church, the MacOC opens its discourse and grants the SerOC the *responsibility* to "present" it as a *separate* actor "to the rest of the autocephalous Churches". Only when this duty of the SerOC has not been carried out, the "Holy Synod MacOC had no alternative but the proclamation of autocephaly" (Macedonian Orthodox Church, *Decision 1967*, Mojanoski 2004: 356). This tension between the *internal* and *external* sources of legitimacy exposes the possible mismatch

between the representations *people's church* and *Orthodox Church*. These two representations offer at times very divergent logics of *appropriateness*, which could sometimes hardly be reconciled.



*Figure 5. Sources of legitimacy for a justified existence of a particular church according to MacOC*

In conclusion, the analysis of the Macedonian Orthodox Church's Selfhood discourse demonstrates the constitutive role language plays for the construction of subjectivity. The articulations of radical identification with district temporal and spatial objects/discourses, as well as the ethical representation of certain power relations as unjust is what makes the emergence of a particular ecclesiastical Subject possible. MacOC is constructed also as an ethno-confessional representative of the Macedonian nation and is thus subjectivized as an agent of *the people*.

#### *Selfhood Discourse of the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric*

##### *A few remarks*

The Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric was found as an ecclesiastical structure of the Serbian Orthodox Church not through a single decision or procedure, but rather by a series of acts, exercised during a relatively long stretch of time. Firstly, in 2002, following the failure

of the Niš Agreement, the Metropolitan of Veles Jovan Vranishkovski accepted the “call” of the Serbian Patriarch Pavle for “ecclesiastical and canonical unity”, “together with all the clergy and the congregation of the eparchy”. As the Macedonian Orthodox Church condemned this decision as “schismatic” for its part, the latter dismissed bishop Jovan as a Metropolitan. Subsequently, the SerOC announced that it recognizes bishop Jovan not only as a Metropolitan of Veles, but also that it appoints him as an “Exarch of Ohrid”, i.e., as a head of the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric. The latter was officially recognized as “autonomous” within SerOC’s jurisdiction only in 2005, when it received *tomos* for “ecclesiastical autonomy” and when its head – bishop Jovan – was confirmed by the Serbian Patriarch as “Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skopje”.

All these developments were related with various sources of discursive authorship, but with regards to the construction of the Selfhood discourse of the OOA as such, three main levels of production are to be taken into consideration. The first one is bishop Jovan in his role as a Metropolitan of Veles. As such, he became a member of the Holy Synod of the SerOC and as such he laid the foundations of the autonomous Archbishopric. The second one is again bishop Jovan, this time in his role as a head of the OOA, together with the whole organization’s official discourse. The third level of production, as already suggested earlier, is the Serbian Orthodox Church when it relates to the MacOC or its own structures in Macedonia. The SerOC’s discourse of othering the Macedonian church was formed already around 1967, hence texts produced in this period should also be scrutinized in order to map the OOA’s *relational Self*. As in the case of the MacOC, the OOA’s different periods and sources of identity construction are analyzed as building *one*, integrated discourse and thus they are to be presented.

The three dimensions of OOA’s discourse do not have equal to these of MacOC’s proportions. Since the former was to be recognized by the Orthodox World almost by default (being part of the autocephalous SerOC), it did not need to be legitimized ecclesiastically. Rather, it had to convince the Macedonian laity (and general public) that the MacOC is illegitimate. In that sense, the emphasis on the ethical dimension in OOA’s discourse prevails over the weight of the temporal and spatial ones, although the latter also play interesting role in the construction of the Self in question.



### *Spatial Dimension of OOA's Selfhood Discourse*

One crucial aspect of OOA's general spatial mapping is its representation of *the* Orthodox Church's geography as one, singular ecclesiastical *area*, which is only partially dependent on geopolitics. In that sense, the Orthodox Church is constructed as operating *in spite of* the political dynamics, as a body that only superficially and formally takes the shape(s) of the respective political vessels. This representation is not so stable in SerOC's discourse, since the latter openly asserts the historical "Serbian character" of its structures, but with regards to the ecclesiastical mapping of Macedonia, both OOA and SerOC systematically articulate the construction "Orthodox Church in Macedonia" or "the eparchies on the territory of Macedonia" (Holy Synod of the SerOC, *Letter to Metropolitan Jovan*, June 2002). This geographical designation of the ecclesial structures comes to avoid any historical or ethnic references that are so common for the rival MacOC's discourse. The focus on *the ecclesial* and the neglect of *the national* is one of the key operations of differentiation of the OOA's discourse vis-à-vis the MacOC.

Directly related with this logic of mapping is SerOC's spatial representation of the ecclesiastical space of Macedonia. The latter is systematically articulated as "a part" of the Serbian Church not due to "political or national reasons", but because of certain established *canonical geography* and *order*. More about the normative aspects of the discourse in question would be said later, but with regards to the construction of *Macedonia* as such in OOA/SerOC's language, it is important to note that the latter do not negate in principle the Macedonian statehood and nationhood. What OOA/SerOC's discourse does is to contest the "canonical grounds" for the emergence of MacOC as a particular church on SerOC's "canonical territory". This is one of the reasons why in 1967 Patriarch German signed his "Letter to the Holy Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church" (Serbian Orthodox Church, *Letter 1967*, Mojanoski 2004: 313) as "Serbian and Macedonian Patriarch". Moreover, around 1967 and especially in the period 2002-2005 SerOC has treated the MacOC simultaneously as an "ill member" of its body *and* as a separate "schismatic religious organization" (idem) which has no rights over the administration of the ecclesial life in Macedonia. This ambiguous construction of the MacOC is sustained as meaningful through a transference of a *nation state logic* into ecclesiology: a secessionist subject is considered a *separate* actor, but nonetheless it remains an actor - *object* of national law and jurisdiction, because of its operation on

nation state territory. It is in this logic that the SerOC appointed bishop Jovan as an Exarch of Ohrid and simultaneously requested MacOC to “allow” him (Holy Synod of SerOC, *Letter to Metropolitan Jovan*, September 2002) to return to his *cathedra* in Veles.

Another moment of discursive contestation at the level of spatiality is OOA/SerOC’s representation of Macedonia in the period 1945-1991. While the MacOC articulates Macedonia as a “territorially deified state”, the rival discourse sticks to emphasizing the former’s status as “only a part of a federation” (Serbian Orthodox Church, *Decision 1967*, Mojanoski 2004: 393), thus incorporating it into a different spatial power structure. This representation is critical, because it maps *spaces of authority* and constrains certain types of agency. Even though the SerOC/OOA’s discourse did not contest the autonomy of Macedonia in Federal Yugoslavia and it did not question the Macedonian “separateness and sovereignty” (Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric, *Public Communique 2003*) in the period 2002-2005, it clearly constructs the Macedonian Self as *qualitatively different* in all aspects in question – ethno-national, state, and ecclesiastical, compared with the *established* Serbian Self.

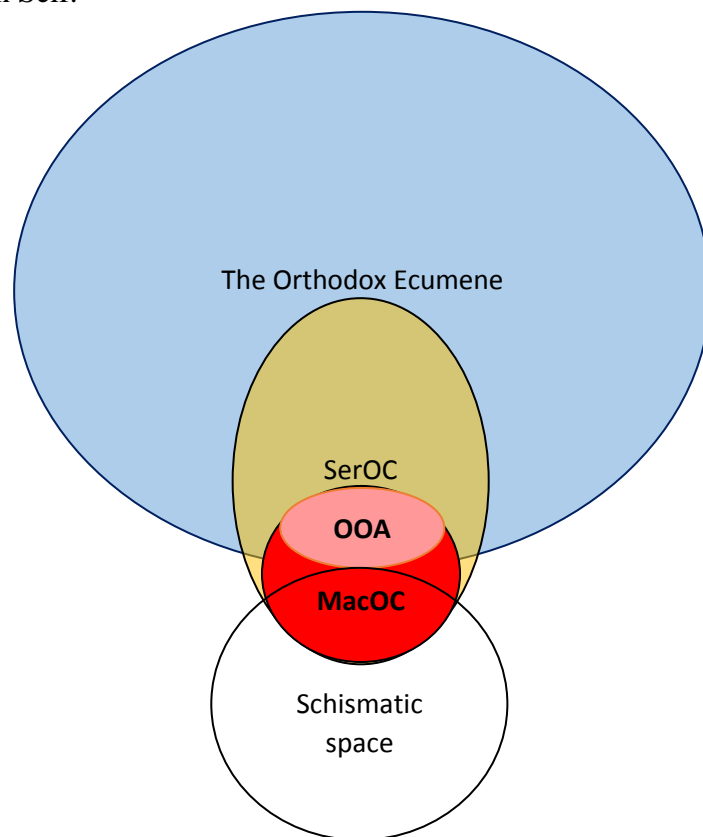


Figure 6. Schematic representation of the spatial dimension of OOA-SerOC discourse.

### *Temporal Dimension of OOA's Selfhood Discourse*

In terms of temporal representation, the OOA articulates itself as a jurisdictional embodiment of a continuous and uninteruptable Orthodox ecclesiastical canonicity. Its *formal* emergence as an institution is constructed as a mere expression of a perennial ecclesial tradition. This canonical *statis* of OOA is attributed to the latter's *unity* with SerOC, which for its own part is represented as a *metonymy* of the *one* Orthodox Church.

Alternately, the MacOC is constructed as an instance of *temporal disturbance* of the primordial canonical order. The latter's emergence is depicted as a result of temporal political deviations from a certain unnamed ideal politico-ecclesial regime. The inception of a separate Orthodox jurisdiction in Macedonia is politicized (thus de-politicizing the Serbian hegemony) and attributed to the "Ottoman and the Communist yokes":

"The schisms motivated by ethnophiletistic urges are typical for the life of the Church in the 19th and 20th century. These are probably the most unreasonable and most senseless schisms in the history of the Church [...] a fruit of the decadence of the faith after the burden of the Ottoman and communist oppression." (Archbishop Jovan 2000\*: 37)

The *othering* of MacOC is exercised not only thorough its representation as temporally embedded in a given particular political setting, but also by unlinking it from its alleged history: "there is no room for comparisons between today's MacOC and the Ohrid Archbishopric whereas that is possible when it comes to the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Patriarchate of Pec" (Serbian Orthodox Church, *Decision 1967*, Mojanoski 2004: 393). In contrast to the continuous and organic existence of the SerOC, the MacOC is represented as an artificial "creation", a "non-ecclesial project", the sole purpose of which is to essentially "destroy" *the* Church in Yugoslavia (Archbishop Jovan 2000\*: 25). It is in that vein when Archbishop Jovan of OOA asserts "[t]he bishop does not acquire his identity from the environment where he lives, but he receives it directly from God" (Metropolitan and Exarch Jovan 2003). This identification covers all spatial, temporal and ethical dimensions, but it is important to place it in this section due to its emphasis on *history*. According OOA's discourse, it is possible – for an ecclesiastical structure – to identify with something different from the Divine only under certain "historical conditions" such as anti-Christian rule or attack. This reasoning partially stabilizes the

otherwise problematic from this perspective identification of the *Serbian* Orthodox Church with *Serbia* in given discourse.

Interestingly enough, although the OOA portrays its Self as politically neutral, its discourse appears to be rather dedicated not only to expose the “political character” of MacOC (Archbishop Jovan 2000\*: 29), but also to dismantle the whole “mythology” of and around the “so-called Macedonian church” (Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric, *Announcement* 2004). This operation includes not only the aforementioned discursive unlinking of the rival “schismatic organization” from the historical image of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, but also proving wrong the “made-up” narratives about the *Macedonian church, nation, and state*. Quoting in some length in needed:

“[T]he Ohrid Archbishopric was never autocephalous from the aspect of today’s understanding of autocephaly and [...] it has never been a national Church of the Macedonian people.” (idem)

“We presume that the greatest perplexity was created when the communist historiography of the after-the-war constructed People’s Republic of Macedonia started calling Samuel the tsar of the Macedonians, despite the fact that he called himself the czar (sic) of the Bulgarians, and he was defeated by Basil II the Macedonian Bulgaroknotos (Bulgar-slayer).” (Archbishop Jovan 2000\*: 18)

“Wanting to show that the inhabitants of the territory of the then People’s Republic of Macedonia are brothers with the other people of Yugoslavia, they called them Slavs. To be honest, this was only a continuance of the pan-Slavic propaganda which started in Russia through the newly created Bulgarian state in the 19th century. This might have not been such a problem if on the other hand they did not insist on the contrary as well, which is that the inhabitants of the aforementioned regions are the descendants of the ancient Macedonians.” (Archbishop Jovan 2000\*: 17)

It is in this context of projected lack of historical and canonical grounds for an existence of an autocephalous Macedonian church, that the comparison with the Serbian Orthodox Church becomes pivotal for the Selfhood construction of OOA as a part of it:

“Saint Sava’s Archbishopric and the Patriarchate of Pec, as well the revived ones [the modern *Serbian* Churches], since the times of the medieval Serbian state, have had Serbian character, have been formed on Serbian lands [...]. [The historical Archbishopric of Ohrid, however,] never had purely ethnic Macedonian character, nor has it been called Macedonian” (idem).

Here, as hinted earlier, resides one of the *openings* of SerOC/OOA’s discourse: since the Serbian Orthodox Church is historically *Serbian* and it recognizes, in principle, that the laity/citizens in Macedonia are *not Serbian*, then why to continue to hold power in there and why to establish OOA whatsoever? The meaning stabilization of this state of affairs is exercised through a series of representations of certain *normativity*.

#### *Ethical Dimension of OOA’s Selfhood Discourse*

In the SerOC/OOA’s discourse, as it is also the case for MacOC, *unity* proves to be among the most privileged signs. The imperative for togetherness is linked with the ecclesiastical notion of *Eucharistic Communion*, which, according to the Christian theology, should be shared by the whole Christian community, regardless of jurisdiction. In the SerOC/OOA’s discourse, however, “unity” as a *norm* does not presuppose equality between the ecclesiastical structures, as it does in MacOC’s view. Rather, “the unity” is represented as *canonical* inasmuch as it reflects *hierarchy*, or in other words – unity is seen as a power structure. The power that is constitutive for the *canonical unity* between the Church in Macedonia and “the rest of the Orthodox Ecumene” is the power that holds the former and the SerOC together – the authority of the Patriarch in Belgrade and the presided by him Serbian Holy Synod. In that sense, the *Communion*, or what makes of the structures of the Orthodox Church – an Orthodox Church, is articulated as inextricably connected to a *respect* for the canons – respect for the “supreme” authority that, in the SerOC/OOA’s discourse, is. In this ecclesiastical terrain “rules yield rule” as well, to conclude by applying Nicholas Onuf’s (2013: 17) inference to the SerOC’s discourse:

“[The fact that] the inferior ecclesiastical authorities and organs - in their general actions and endeavors – are dependent on the superior ecclesiastical authorities is clear from multiple canons [of the] Church”. (Serbian Orthodox Church, *Decision 1967*, Mojanoski 2004: 393)

The institution of OOA, therefore, is a process articulated as a direct result of the schism (the latter making of MacOC everything, but “not a Church”). Therefore “the overcoming of the schism” (Archbishop Jovan 2000\*: 17) as the establishment of OOA is defined as, is articulated as a deontological necessity for the SerOC. The latter has a “duty” to the “honorable Macedonian people” (Serbian Orthodox Church, *Letter* 2003) inasmuch as it is *responsible* “for the benefit and the future of the Church of God, life and salvation of all of us”. Its decisions, in that sense, are not a “matter of earthly interests and aims” (Patriarch Pavle, *Address* 2002) and are taken only with “respect [for] the national determination and the national identity of the Macedonian people” (idem). The post-2002 OOA’s representation of “unity” follows similar logic. “Unity” is articulated with a great emphasis on Orthodox *ecumenicity* (universality) as a virtue in itself, a virtue that is represented as incommensurable with any power struggles over jurisdiction. The authority of the SerOC over Macedonia is thus constructed not merely as a form of superiority of the “established” Serbian Church over the historically objectified Macedonian Orthodox structures, but as a manifestation of a universal canonical normativity.

The construction of OOA’s identity is based on a few other crucial discursive differentiations on the ethical scale, besides its linking with the *ecumenical Orthodoxy*. The “ethical Others” of the “canonical Church in Macedonia” include: the “schismatic so-called MacOC” for its “church-canonical insanity and ecclesiological suicide” (Letter 13.05.2003), the Macedonian state in its “oppressive” capacity vis-à-vis the OOA and personally towards its main *victim* – bishop Jovan, also the “Communists” “who destroyed the churches everywhere around the world” but in Macedonia “created a church” (Archbishop Jovan 2000\*: 25), as well as all the “schismatic movements [...] from the Balkans to Ukraine” (Letter 25.06.2002). This panorama of *otherness* constructs OOA as a *martyr* whose only reposal is the “consciousness of justice”.

In addition, all the Others are linked in a network knit by “primitivism”, “barbarism” (Announcement 12.01.2004) and *incivility* (“uncivilized pressure” in Announcement 07.02.2004). Interestingly enough, what comes as a sharp contrast to this shared image of the Others is *Europe*. The construction *Europe* in SerOC/OOA’s discourse is attached to signs such as “democracy” (Patriarch Pavle, *Letter* 2002). What is more, the “European civilization” and the “European institutions” are equated (Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric,

*Announcement* 2004) and generally *Europe* is represented as a *normative space* whereby *Macedonia* does not belong due to its “disregard for the human rights” (idem).

With regards to inconsistencies in SerOC’s discourse, there is one crucial “fissure” which destabilizes its normative self-representation with regards to power. Quoting in some length is necessary:

“The Ecumenical Councils in which the apostolic power in concentrated have prescribed a general norm with regards to autocephaly [...] And for the resolution of local problems the Ecumenical episcopate has transferred this power to its organs, the councils of the autocephalous Churches. [...] Thus today, the Synod of an autocephalous Church is, in fact, the only legal factor, the sole instance which could grant autocephaly.” (Serbian Orthodox Church, *Decision 1967*, Mojanoski 2004: 394)

“The Serbian Orthodox Church [...] recognizes broad church independence, that is, broadest church autonomy to the existing eparchies of the orthodox church in the Republic of Macedonia, that is, the Ohrid Archbishopric and its diaspora, leaving the question of the final resolution according to the canonical order of the Orthodox Church, to the future pan-Orthodox concord of the Fullness of the Church in the Holy Spirit.” (*Draft Agreement* 2002)

This oscillation between two different *loci* of decision-making demonstrates SerOC’s *a priori* reluctance to forgo power in Macedonia. The lack of any substantial representation of a *perspective* for autocephaly in Macedonia is even more telling in that respect.

In conclusion, the examination of the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric’s Selfhood discourse shows that OOA’s identity is relationally constructed and constituted on a discursive articulations of *difference*. The difference vis-à-vis the “uncanonical MacOC” is represented as radical, whereas the difference with regards to the Serbian Orthodox Church is articulated *within* a discursive framework of meaningful and just power relations. Such construction of the OOA’s Selfhood enables it to contest MacOC’s legitimacy in Macedonia, but at the same time constrains its subjectivity in terms of jurisdictional independence.

## *Bessarabian Metropolitanate's Selfhood Discourse*

### *A few remarks*

The articulations of Bessarabian Metropolitanate's Selfhood have been intertwined with Romanian Orthodox Church's general discourse since the former's very inception in 1992. The emergence of BM on the "canonical territory" of the Russian Orthodox Church *qua* structure of the RomOC requires, as mentioned earlier, a common interpretation of the representations produced from both Bucharest and the Romanian Church's structure in Moldova. This mode of analysis, however, does not necessarily mean that the BM is to be treated as deprived of agency. The way the latter relates to Bucharest and Moscow in its discourse is, in this study's view, the very substance of its Self-production and the stemming from it possibilities for action. What kind of actorness emerges from the discursive articulation of these relations is to be examined in the following paragraphs.

### *Spatial Dimension of BM's Selfhood Discourse*

The Bessarabian Metropolitanate's spatial representation is relatively fixed on the territory of contemporary Republic of Moldova. The multitude of references to this state's political space testify for the latter's function as a *nodal point* in BM's discursive geographical placement. What is more interesting in this spatial dimension, however, are the disclosures of its unfixity.

One of the key ruptures in that regard stems from the very name of the Metropolitanate. Although there is no consensus for the exact geographical delineation of the toponym *Bessarabia* (*Basarabia* in Romanian) and considering that it has "moved" around the map quite many times throughout the last centuries, one could certainly assert that whatever *Bessarabia* designates it does not overlap fully with the territory of the Republic of Moldova. The historical connotation of that naming is discussed in the next section, but concerning space, it is to be noted that in the BM's discourse *Bessarabia* is articulated as transcending the *contingency* of the Republic's borders. What is more, Bessarabia is constructed as an *organic* space whereas the Republic of Moldova's representations suggest a certain degree of artificiality.

The title of the head of the BM also has implications in this regard. Bishop Petru's denomination as "Metropolitan of Bessarabia and Exarch of the Remote Lands" (in



Romanian: *Mitropolitul Basarabiei și Exarhul Plaiurilor*<sup>19</sup>) suggests that his jurisdiction does not only apply to Bessarabia, whatever that toponym designates, but also to other undefined spaces. The title of the bishop, for a matter of fact, has been transmitted to the institution he presides, thus labeling it as “Bessarabian Metropolitanate and Exarchate of the Remote Lands” (in Romanian: *Mitropolia Basarabiei și Exarhat al Plaiurilor*, idem.). What is more, regardless of Bessarabia’s relative geographical unfixity, it is established that this designation does not include what is called today *Transnistria*. Interestingly enough, the Bessarabian Metropolitanate, albeit having no physical presence in that region, has included it – discursively – as a separate eparchy within its jurisdiction<sup>20</sup>.

What sustains, then, the meaning of the spatial representation(s) of the BM, considering the mentioned translocations? *Bessarabia* is systematically depicted as an “ancient Romanian land” (e.g., in Patriarch Teoctist, *Letter to the Sister Churches 1993*, *Letter to Alexy II 1993*, *Adevărul* 1993: 68-72, 85-102). Such representation, besides constructing *Bessarabia* as a historical space of the Romanian state, articulates the former as *Romanian* in the very ethnic sense. In Patriarch Teoctist’s words:” As you know, as the Soviet state broke apart, the Republic of Moldova, whose inhabitants are mostly Romanian Orthodox Christians, is among the states that have gained independence” (*Letter to the Sister Churches 1993*, *Adevărul* 1993: 88-72). Leaving the assertion that Moldova is predominantly Romanian aside, one should note the articulation of the very *raison d’être* of the RomOC. That is to satisfy the spiritual needs of the ethnic Romanians regardless of their location, i.e., to serve “the Orthodox Romanians everywhere” (Patriarch Teoctist, *Letter to the President and the Prime Minister 1992*, *Adevărul* 1993: 62-68; Bishop Petru, *Application 1992*, Ciorbă 2011: 411). In that sense, the RomOC is *everywhere* whereby Orthodox Romanians reside:

“The Romanian Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church are willing to engage in a fraternal dialogue on the question of jurisdiction over all Romanian Orthodox in the former Soviet Union, not only the Romanians of Bessarabia but

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<sup>19</sup> Official web-page of the Bessarabian Metropolitanate: <http://mitropoliabasarabiei.md/ierarhi>

<sup>20</sup> Administrative division of the Bessarabian Metropolitanate – Official web-page of the BM: <http://mitropoliabasarabiei.md/administrativ>

also those from Transnistria, Northern Bucovina, Transcarpathian Ukraine, North Caucasus, Far East or Siberia” (Archbishop Petru, *Interview*, Alfa și Omega 1996)

This *ethnos*-based mapping that the RomOC ascribes to its jurisdiction, as well as the special title that the BM’s first hierarch bears make of the Bessarabian Metropolitanate a distinct type of a transnational ethnic ecclesiastical structure. That could be seen also from its Statue:

“The Bessarabian Metropolitanate (old style) could also be joined by communities outside of Bessarabia, including diaspora communities.

In its activity on the territory of Republic of Moldova, the Bessarabian Metropolitanate (old style) will respect the law of this state. The relations of the Bessarabian Metropolitanate (old style) with other will be established and maintained in accordance to the respective legislations.” (*Preambulul Statutului*, Adevărul 1993: 43)

The spatial representation of the BM proves to be rather ethno-political than geo-political also with regards to the articulation of spaces of jurisdiction within Moldova. In multiple instances the RomOC suggests that the Russian Orthodox Church is welcomed in Moldova, however, to administrate only the spiritual life of the Russians residing there (among others: Patriarch Teoctist, *Letter to the President and the Prime Minister 1992*, Adevărul 1993: 62-68). From this ethnocentric perspective, the aforementioned Transnistria is to be seen as part of the *Romanian World* – inasmuch as it hosts significant Romanian/Moldovan speaking Orthodox population.

The inclusion of Transnistria, albeit “virtually”, as an eparchy of the BM could also be interpreted as gesture of recognition of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. The Bessarabian Metropolitanate might be “responsible” for Orthodox Romanians beyond the borders of the Republic, but the outlines of its own borders, inasmuch as a *local* church cannot escape from drawing frontiers, do overlap with the map of the Republic of Moldova. The consistent designation of Bessarabia as a (historical) *Romanian land* by the RomOC/BM is interpreted by many as paving the way for “irredentism”. However, the RomOC/BM’s discourse remains more ambiguous in that regard. Although Romania is constructed as the state manifestation of the Romanian

nation, a paradigmatic distinction is delineated, in the discourse in question, between *state* and *nation*. The former is a political category, the dimensions of which are open to change and are dependent on historical dynamics. The latter, on other hand, is organic and natural and in that sense primordial and *apolitical*. The RomOC consistently refers to the Republic of Moldova as an “independent state” whose sovereignty should be respected and what is more – the Patriarchate in Bucharest ascribes to itself the role of a promoter of Moldova’s independence:

“However, we consider that the act of the Romanian Patriarchate does not encroach on the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova or its state independence, moreover, the Romanian Patriarchate was the first one to address all the sister Orthodox Churches in the world [and] other Churches, as well as the international Christian organizations [appealing to] them [to] intervene with the governments all over the world in favor of recognizing the independence of the Republic of Moldova.” (idem)

In sum, the Bessarabian Metropolitanate’s spatial representation is inextricably linked with the “geography” of *the Romanian nation*. In that sense, the Metropolitanate is simultaneously an “inseparable part of the Romanian Patriarchate” (Archbishop Petru, *Interview*, Alfa și Omega 1996), an *autonomous* Church of the Romanians in the *independent* Republic of Moldova, and a transborder ethnic ecclesiastical organization responsible for the spiritual welfare of the Romanians, regardless of their location on the globe.

#### *Temporal dimension of BM’s Selfhood Discourse*

The emergence of the Bessarabian Metropolitanate is articulated in its discourse not just as “restoration” of a particular ecclesiastical entity, but as a return to certain historical *telos*. Key elements of the construction of the temporal dimension of the BM’s Selfhood are the representations of its appearance as a continuation of “the historical Bessarabian Metropolitanate” (Patriarch Teoctist, *Letter to the President and the Prime Minister* 1992, *Adevărul* 1993: 62-68) and as a “return to the mother church of the Romanian nation” (Patriarch Teoctist, *Letter to Alexy II* 1992, *Adevărul* 1993: 19-21). The Self of the BM is linked with the *Romanian Orthodoxy* also through the articulation of shared spiritual and political past:

“Through the reactivation of the Metropolitan See of Basarabia, a repairing act of bringing truth and justice is fulfilled today, which reconstitutes the fullness in the communion of our ancient faith as well as of our Romanian ethos, in this year of the Lord 1992, when Stephen the Great and Holy, the courageous protector of all Moldavia, was proclaimed saint.” (*Patriarchal Act 1992*, Adevărul 1993: 50-51)

The crucial aspect of BM's present legitimacy stems from its grounding in the “ancestral faith” (In Romanian: *credință strămoșească*, *ibid.*). Moreover, this faith is depicted as having ancient roots among “Dacio-Roman ancestors”, thus making the BM not only a “successor” of the interwar BM and of the medieval Moldavian Metropolitanate (the jurisdictional centers of which have always been on the other side of Prut), but also making it an heir of a much older tradition of *Romanian Orthodoxy*. In that sense, Bessarabia is articulated retroactively as a *historical* part of an “*ancient* Romanian canonical territory” (italics mine) (Archbishop Petru, *Interview*, Alfa și Omega 1996) which existed long before the emergence of an autocephalous Romanian Church. The *primordial* status of the Romanians as a “well-defined nation” (Patriarch Teoctist, *Letter to Alexy II 1992*, Adevărul 1993: 19-21) determines the national ecclesiastical independence as a meta-historical destiny which was *naturally* reached “[a]s soon as historical conditions allowed for it” (*ibid.*). In that sense, the emergence of the BM, the Church of the Romanians in Moldova that is, is only “a restoring act of truth and historical justice” (*ibid.*).

Since the ecclesiastical “sovereignty” of all the Romanian people is what constitutes the “historical justice”, then how and when the historical *injustice* took place?

There are two main episodes of *deviation* of the “normal state of things” (*ibid.*). The first one is from the first half the XIX century:

“The annexation of Basarabia to the tsarist empire and the setting up of the Bishopric of Chișinău did not mean, as Your Holiness affirms in the same latter ‘the liberation of Moldova from the Ottoman domination’, but it was just a change from one kind of slavery to an even harsher one.” (*ibid.*)

Interestingly enough, the very same period of “Ottoman slavery” is depicted in the same source as time in which “Turkey had no territorial rights over the Romanian land, its

power over that territory being only that of suzerainty, and not of sovereignty”. The ethical aspects of the different *rules* over Moldova/Bessarabia is to be discussed in the next chapter, however with regards to the articulation of *the logic of history*, one should note that the Selfhood discourse of the BM constructs the Orthodox Bessarabia’s *past* in two categories. The first one consists of the periods of *natural* existence, i.e., in *organic* unity with the rest of the Romanian “brothers”. The second one is composed of spans of *subjection*, i.e., periods of forceful division of the Romanian “organic whole”. The second episode of historical deviation follows a “brief period of normalization” (Patriarch Teoctist, *Letter to Alexy II 1993*, Adevărul 1993: 85-102):

“[T]he Russian Orthodox Church again and again, abusively and non-canonically, imposed the jurisdiction over the Romanian Orthodox believers in this ancient Romanian land in 1940 and then in 1944 after the occupation of Bessarabia by the Soviet troops” (ibid.)

From temporal perspective, the “organic order” has been distorted in the periods of ecclesiastical subordination to Russia. What separates the *abnormal past* from the *natural* – in the making – *present* is the shift of power: from the *alien* Moscow to the *fraternal* Bucharest:

“[U]njust circumstances can last for centuries, but when the conditions allow for it [–] the historical justice requires that injustice be repaired and truth be restored, together with all the rights deriving from that restoration.” (ibid.)

Both the spatial and the temporal dimensions of the Bessarabian Metropolitanate’s Selfhood discourse are constructed through the articulation of certain ethical representation of the Orthodox ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The meaning of the BM as such is produced, in that sense, not as much as in opposition of its spatial Others (“pure” geography fades away in ethnically fragmented and constantly changing world) or in contrast of its temporal Others (after all, the political conditions – the “imperial” and the “communist” *ideologies* – that have produced the temporal otherness are no longer that

relevant). The key dimension that sustains the Selfhood of the BM and which makes the representations of its *time* and *space* meaningful is the *normative* one.

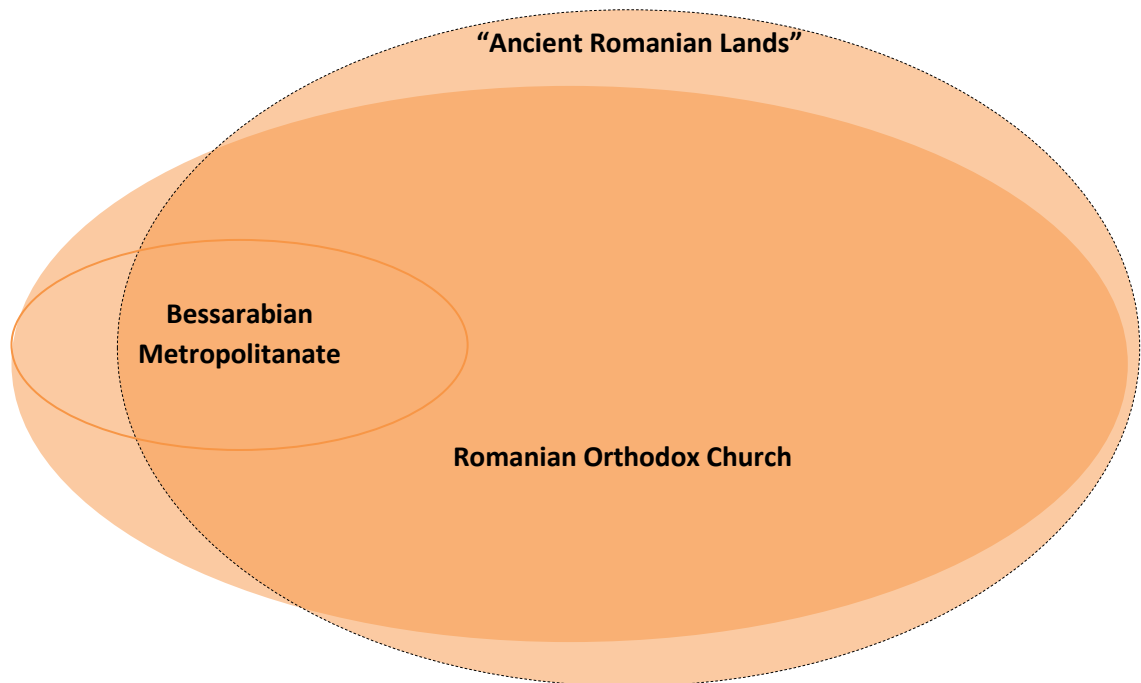


Figure 7. Schematic representation of RomOC/BM's spatial dimension

#### *Ethical Dimension of BM's Selfhood Discourse*

The BM's Selfhood is constructed around a few normative *nodal points*. They can be systematized in the following categories: respect for order, victimization and sacrifice, origin of just power, and representation of the unethical Other.

The Bessarabian Metropolitanate is articulated before all else as an *orderly* actor. It embodies “canonical justice” and “historical truth” while being at the same time also “respectful vis-à-vis the secular authorities”. As the head of BM – bishop Petru – puts it: “We believe [...] that we have to do our duty as good citizens of the state and as members of the Church” (Archbishop Petru, *Interview*, Alfa și Omega 1996). A crucial aspect of the BM's normative identity is its representation as “obeying the norms of the Church”.

That is why when bishop Petru shifted his allegiance from the RusOC to the RomOC, he did it – according to the RomOC/BM’s discourse – only after being “so cruelly persecuted by Archbishop Vladimir and his entourage” (Bishop Petru, *Application 1992*, Ciorbă 2011: 411). Moreover, as the narrative goes, bishop Petru received no response from Moscow when asking the Patriarch for help, thus the former was left with no other option, but to seek “high protection” (ibid.) from the “Mother Church”. As discussed earlier, the “gravity” towards Bucharest is constructed as *natural* for multiple reasons, but here – from the current normative perspective – one should note the articulation of *ethnic integrity* as “a principle” of the Orthodox ecclesiology in general. A multitude of references to canon law and *tradition* are made in the RomOC/BM’s discourse, naturalizing thus the ethnocentric organization of ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the Orthodox Church. The key citation – Canon 34 of the Canons of the Holy Apostles<sup>21</sup> – is interpreted as referring to “nation” (as the Romanian “kin nationalism” understands it). Hence, the *norm* that a Church has the right “to organize itself from the ethnic point of view, independently, of the Church of another nation” (Patriarch Teoctist, *Letter to Alexy II 1993*, Adevărul 1993: 85-102) is articulated as perennial<sup>22</sup>.

The implications of this representation of ethnic normativity are self-evident. The power of any *hetero-ethnic* actor over “Us” is articulated as unjust and unnatural. Furthermore, the state of the *Romanians in Bessarabia* during tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union is articulated not as a mere unjustified *foreign* rule, but as an utter victimhood. Unlike the “Turks [who], at least, have respected our traditions, language and national specificity” (Letter to Alexy II 1993) Russia has “performed” (during the “first occupation”) “denationalization of the Romanians from Basarabia and [have estrange them] from their brothers and sisters living on the other side of Prut river” (idem). The “second occupation” is represented as even more detrimental:

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<sup>21</sup> The Canons of the Eastern Orthodox Church: <https://sites.google.com/site/canonsoc/home/canons-of-the-apostles/canons-i-xl>

<sup>22</sup> The actual text of the canon in Greek refers to *ethnos*. The meaning of this term has changed tremendously throughout the centuries denoting various different types of social groupings. For discussion see: Eriksen (1996). The text of Canon 34 in Greek: [http://users.uoa.gr/~nektar/orthodoxy/tributes/regulations/00\\_apostolic.htm](http://users.uoa.gr/~nektar/orthodoxy/tributes/regulations/00_apostolic.htm)

“The consequences of that fact are very well known: the destruction or the closing down of most of the churches and monasteries by the occupant Soviet regime, the appointment of a hierarchy foreign to the nation and to the language of the Romanian clergy and faithful living in Basarabia, the dissolution of the Metropolitan See of Basarabia, which was set up by the Romanian Patriarchate, in 1928.” (idem)

This articulation is crucial for the construction of the ethical Self of the BM: the linking between the attack against Christianity as such and the attack against Romanian identity shapes an eclectic offensive Other which, in turn, fuses the ethical weight of the faith with the one of the nation. The aggregate ethical Other has in RomOC/BM’s discourse a few representations: Imperial Russia, Soviet Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church in its function as a state executive church, and the “local structure of the Patriarchate of Moscow” (Bessarabian Metropolitanate, *The Problem*, Alfa și Omega 1995), the Metropolitanate of Chișinău and all Moldova, that is. These representations are all articulated as “faces” of one and the same threat: the threat to the unity of the Romanian nation.

*Romanianness* is sacralized and represented not only as primordial ethnic category, but also as a moral one – inspiring a “holy wish of national freedom and dignity” (ibid.). In that sense, the sources of just ecclesiastical power are not separated as *adherence to the canons* on one hand and a *homo-ethnic jurisdiction* on the other. These two, in RomOC/BM’s discourse, are one and the same thing. What is more, in this discourse the ecclesiastical actors are represented as expected to follow high *democratic* standards. The norm for being *of* and *for* the people applies fully to the “Church of the Nation”: “The institution of the Romanian Patriarchate belongs both to the clergy and the to the faithful” (Patriarch Teoctist, *Patriarhat*, Alfa și Omega, February 1996). The Church is to represent *its* people and to protect it/them. The RomOC/BM’s narrative often emphasizes on the lack of consent “from the people” with regards to the past shifts of ecclesiastical governance in favor of Moscow. Yet, when it comes to the power exercised from Bucharest, democratic legitimacy is taken for granted. In that sense, the hierarchical power relations between the Romanian Patriarchate and the Bessarabian Metropolitanate



are represented not in “the spirit of domination [...] but [as of] parental care” (Patriarch Teoctist, *Letter to the President and the Prime Minister 1992*, Adevărul 1993: 62-68). The articulation of *maternal duty* of the RomOC for the BM is constructed also as “canonical protection” (among others: *Patriarchal Act 1992*, Adevărul 1993: 50-51). Outside of this protection/jurisdiction, therefore, the Bessarabian Metropolitanate would be uncanonical. A hypothetical “canonization” of an independent Bessarabian Church from Romanian side is completely omitted as a possibility in RomOC’s public discourse, because – as bishop Petru puts it – RomOC is “a Church of all Romanians” (Letter to the Romanian Patriarchate 1992). This ethno-confessional deontology is a recurring leitmotif in BM’s Selfhood discourse. The very meaning of Metropolitanate’s existence is to take care of the *Romanians* in Moldova, “as it has been doing in the past”:

“The Bessarabian Metropolitanate [...] carried out a fruitful and unanimously appreciated activity [in the interwar period], being an important factor both in the development of religious life in this part of the country and in consolidation and development relations with all the other Romanian provinces.” (Romanian Orthodox Church, *Introduction*, Adevărul 1993:11-13)

The “wellbeing” of the Romanians in Moldova is articulated as distorted under the condition of *separation* from the organic body of their *neam*. However, the RomOC’s discourse represents the Bessarabian Metropolitanate, the Moldovan state, and the “Romanians from the right side of Prut” as distinct subjects of their own. Therefore, although the latter are constructed as naturally linked with *all dimensions of Romania*, they are *free* and only on the basis of their *free decision*, without interference from Bucharest that is, they are to “foster relations” with “their bothers” (Letter to Alexy II 1993). Nonetheless, if that freedom is not exercised as it is naturally expected (for instance – by the Moldovan authorities), the given subject is labelled as “complicit” with *foreign* interests (Archbishop Petru, *Interview*, Alfa și Omega 1996) and ultimately as *unfree*.

Two more representations in BM’s Selfhood discourse deserve attention. The first one in related with the role of the European Court of Human Rights in the official recognition

of the Metropolitanate in Moldova. Throughout the process the BM has not only articulated adherence to “fundamental rights” and “democratic standards”, but also has constructed itself as an agent of/for such in Moldova. Moreover, the normative space of these ethical pillars is *Europe* and the latter’s institutions are projected as guarantors of international law. Linking itself with this normative *locus*, the BM constructs its identity, albeit implicitly, as distinct (vis-à-vis Russia), European one.

In conclusion, the Selfhood discourse of BM enables it as an agent, albeit not as a completely independent one. In that sense, the agency of the Metropolitanate is constructed as *meaningful* only as part of the hierarchical architecture of the Romanian Orthodoxy, the supreme authority of which is located *outside* of *Bessarabia*. The BM is an ecclesiastical agent inasmuch as it represents the Romanian Orthodoxy and therefore its actorness is enabled in Moldova and elsewhere *Romanians* reside. However, this Romanian-centric identification constrains the BM from being a *radical* subject, a particular ecclesiastical organization, that is.

#### *Metropolitanate of Chişinău and all Moldova’s Selfhood Discourse*

##### *A few remarks*

The MCM emerged as the structure that it is today in 1991-1994. As a “Self-governing Church” and a “part of the Moscow Patriarchate” (Statue of the RusOC 2000), the MCM or “the Orthodox Church in Moldova” (ibid.) has been shaped from both the Russian capital and from Chişinău from its very inception. It is not by chance that this ecclesiastical organization was registered first in the Russian Ministry of Justice and it was recognized officially by the Moldovan government only three years later (Panainte 2006: 95). The role of the Moscow Patriarchate in MCM’s governance has been especially visible in the establishment of the Eparchy of Tiraspol and Dubăsari in 1995-1998, although the latter is formally under the “independent in its internal affairs” jurisdiction of the Metropolitanate of Chişinău (for discussion, see Matsuzato 2009). Notwithstanding some tensions between Chişinău and Moscow in that regard, the MCM and the RusOC have been speaking generally in one voice with regards to the identity of

the former. Analysis of key aspects of the construction of this identity are presented in the following section.

### *Spatial Dimension of MCM's Selfhood Discourse*

The constriction of boundaries in RusOC/MCM's discourse is closely linked with a few types of delineations. The first and most obvious type is the representation of the MCM as an "independent church", the borders of which overlap with these of an "independent state" – the Republic of Moldova (Patriarch Alexy II, *Tomos 1994*, Ciorbă 2011: 431). However, the ecclesiastical independence of MCM is constructed as one taking place in a larger jurisdictional space<sup>23</sup>. The "canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church" covers "the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Latvia, the Republic of Lithuania, Mongolia, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Republic of Estonia, Japan" (Statute of the RusOC 2000). Within the borders of these *political* entities the Moscow Patriarchate ascribes to itself the uppermost jurisdictional primacy. In that sense, the spatial delineation of MCM articulates two borders – the border of its "internal autonomy" and the frontier of the Moscow's jurisdictional supremacy. In MCM's Selfhood discourse, the Prut river designates both of these borderlines vis-à-vis the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

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<sup>23</sup> In that regard it is worth noting that the title of the head of the MCM is *Metropolitan of Chişinău and all Moldova* – reminiscent of the one of the Primate of the RusOC – *Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus'*. Taking this into account, it would not be baseless to assume that since the jurisdiction of the Patriarch includes Moldova, the latter is considered *a part of all Rus'*.

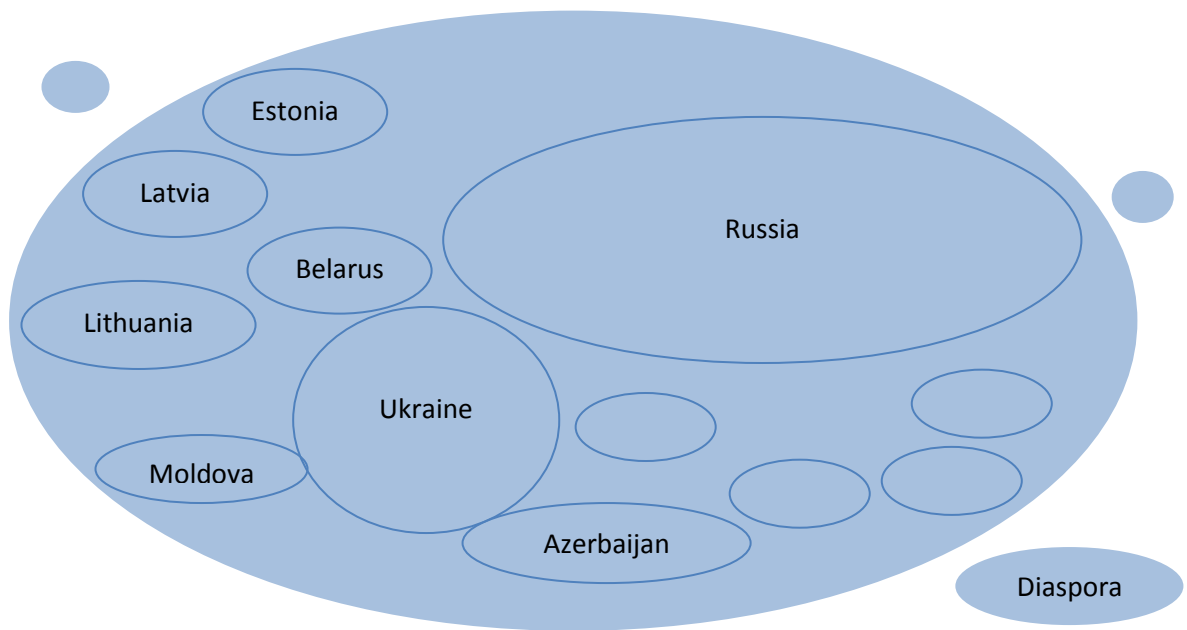


Figure 8. Schematic representation of RusOC's spatial dimension

Another type of border-drawing, this time within Moldova, is the delineation of *plural* “Orthodox communities” (Letter to Teoctist). The RusOC/BM’s discourse refers to a multitude of Orthodox groups in the country, based on the languages they speak:

“In the sacred places of Orthodox Church in Moldova, the divine services shall be performed in Romanian language. In some parishes – in Slavonic, Ukrainian, Gagauz, or Bulgarian language, depending on the nationalities and preferences of the respective parish.” (Statute of the Orthodox Church in Moldova 1993: General Principles)

This type of internal bordering is *soft*, however, as for it does not map *jurisdictional power*. Alternatively, the articulation of plurality of different communities within the ecclesial space of MCM makes any type of origin-driven aspirations for organization of ecclesiastical governance *detrimental* for the “unity of the Orthodox Church”.

Since the RusOC is not the only Orthodox Church out there, what determines that only Moscow can *protect* the “unity of the ecclesial body” in Moldova?

### *Temporal Dimension of BCM's Selfhood Discourse*

The representation of history is the one that sustains the structure of meaning of Moscow Patriarchate's power in Moldova. It is worth quoting Alexy II's narrative in some length:

“Since ancient times, the Orthodox Church on the territory of the Moldavian Principality has been in the sphere of influence and jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Russian-Turkish war, which began in 1768, led to the liberation of part of Moldavia and Wallachia from Ottoman domination. On the liberated from Russian troops territories, it was established an administration of the Holy Synod [...] of the Russian Orthodox Church, which was named [established] its exarchates in these regions. As a result of the Russian-Turkish War of 1806-1812 [and] according to the Bucharest Peace Treaty of 1812, the territory between Dniester and Prut, named in 1813 Bessarabia, became part of Russia.” (Patriarch Alexy II, *Letter to the Minister of Culture and Cults* 1992, Ciorbă 2011: 407)

This portrayal of the past constructs the legitimacy of RusOC's primacy in Moldova on three levels. The first one is based on the articulation of historical absence of endogenous ecclesiastical subjectivity between Prut and Dniester, hence the Church governance there has *always been external*. However, as a second level, Constantinople's ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Moldova is articulated implicitly as coupled with the *unjust* (for it being Muslim) Ottoman rule in the region. Since it was *Russia* (without adjectives) which “liberated” and incorporated these lands, it gets the *right* to administrate them. From there on, due to these essentially political developments, Moscow is the one to decide on the future of the ecclesial space in Moldova. The subjectivity of the Church in Moldova is recognized when it happened to operate in an independent state. This subjectivity, however, is articulated in RusOC/MCM's discourse as *subaltern* in practice. Since the Moldovan ecclesiastical structures are spatially and historically situated in the Russian hegemonic space-time, the primacy of Moscow obtains there a “canonical status”.

However, not all political developments have equal effect on jurisdictional shifts:

“First of all, we do not consider that it is legitimated to link the problems addressed in the Communiqué of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church of April 9, which concern only to our two Churches, [with] the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, which is a specific political document, unable to effect the solution of ecclesiastical problems.” (ibid.)

Clearly, there are *organic* shifts of governance and *deviant* ones: “In 1918 Bessarabia was occupied by Romanian troops” and the RomOC “by administrative means imposed [its] power on the Chişinău eparchy” (ibid.). In 1944, however, “the territory of the [...] eparchy was liberated from the occupation of the enemy by the Soviet troops” (ibid.). This articulation of the signifier *liberation* legitimizes certain historical events and constructs the linked with them political and ecclesiastical developments as *natural* and in a sense as *apolitical*, i.e., as placed *outside* of discussion.

Another focal aspect of RusOC’s legitimacy in Moldova, from temporal perspective, is the articulation of *permanence* of the Moscow’s ecclesiastical governance between Prut and Dniester. Against the backdrop of such established *order*, the emergence of the Romanian Orthodox Church as an institution is depicted first, as recent *per se* and second, as historically foreign to Moldova. The inclusion of Bessarabia into the jurisdiction of RomOC in the interwar period is represented as “illegitimate” since there was no *consent* from Moscow. In sum, the RusOC depicts its post-WWII hegemony in Moldova, as all the actors in this study, as a “restoration” of canonical and historical order (in this case – the order prior to 1919). The establishment of MCM as a subordinated structure is, therefore, simply a *continuation* of a norm. The discursive elements of the construction of this normativity are examined in the following section.

#### *Ethnical Dimension of MCM’s Selfhood Discourse*

Besides the “historical” legitimacy which transfigures into “canonical” one, the justification of MCM’s existence as such, is constructed around a few other nodal points. The already mentioned ecclesiological imperative for jurisdictional singularity at a given space is particularly relevant in RusOC/MCM’s discourse. The naming of MCM as “*the*

Orthodox Church in Moldova” is illustrative in that regard. The Metropolitanate of Chişinău is represented as *the* institution of *the* established ecclesiastical tradition in Moldova and therefore any *interference* into its “internal affairs” (Patriarch Alexy II, *Letter to Patriarch Teoctist 1992*, Adevărul 1993: 58-62) is to be considered uncanonical and “anti-ecclesial” (ibid.). In that sense, MCM is articulated as signifying the normative unity of the Orthodox Church and its Other, respectively as an agent of “schism” and recusancy. That is why “[a]ll the Mysteries and divine services performed by bishop Petru and his heirs have no value and are harmful for those who received them” (Patriarch Alexy II, *Pastoral Letter 1992*, Ciorbă 2011: 418-420). From theological point of view, such assertion has very grave consequences for the relations between any given ecclesial actors and it certainly functions on discursive level as unlinking the Other from its prime source of legitimacy.

Another important aspect of MCM’s Selfhood discourse is the articulation of its democratic representation of the “will” of the faithful and the clergy in Moldova. A recurrent image in this discourse is the one of the “great majority” (Patriarch Alexy II, *Letter to Patriarch Teoctist 1992*, Adevărul 1993: 58-62) which stands with the *legitimate* jurisdiction. In turn, the establishment of BM is constructed as undemocratic and hence *illegitimate*, since the number of its supporters is represented as “marginal”. This line of argumentation stems from the mentioned before *modern tradition* (XIX-XX century) of linking Orthodox Churches with a certain type of popular socio-political representation. The Moscow’s recognition of Moldova’s political independence, a result of the “will of the local people” that is, requires the Patriarchate to recognize a certain level of “democracy” (understood as “self-representation”) with regards to the ecclesiastical organization in this post-Soviet republic. However, notwithstanding the relative subjectivization of Moldova, in its various faces, it is the Local Council of RusOC that is “empowered to take final decisions” (Holy Synod of the RusOC, *Extras din Agenda 1995*, Ciorbă 2011: 433) on the status of the “parts of its of its body”. In sum, the relative ecclesiastical “sovereignty” of the Metropolitanate of Chişinău is constructed as “granted” from *outside*, albeit its endogenous *democratic* origin. The construction of this ecclesiastical power vertical is thus merging MCM’s *organizational interior* with its

*jurisdictional exterior* into one integral “canonical whole”, in which the supremacy of Moscow is to be taken for natural.

Directly linked with this normative representation of “unity” is the meaning-construction of the signifier “division”. Whereas the RomOC/BM’s discourse projects “division” as unethical jurisdictional separation of the *ethnic Romanians*, in the RusOC/MCM’s discourse it signifies the emergence of rival jurisdictions in “established canonical territories”. What is more, the emergence of jurisdictional plurality in Moldova is *securitized* not only as a threat for the “Orthodox Church as whole”, but also as a menace for “the state unity of the Republic of Moldova” (Patriarch Alexy II, *Pastoral Letter 1992*, Ciorbă 2011: 418-420). The *spiritual securitization* (“the schism [is] harmful to the salvation of human souls”, *ibid.*) is combined with *socio-political securitization*, thus constructing Moscow as guarantor of both Church and State integrity in Moldova.

This latter representation has been relatively destabilized in MCM’s discourse for a while in the mid-1990s. This could be seen, for instance, in the letter of archbishop Vladimir, the head of the Metropolitanate, in which he addresses the Russian Patriarch with the concerns of the Moldovan clergy with regards to the appointment of bishop Justinian, “who is not a Moldovan” (Metropolitan Vladimir, *Report 1995*, Ciorbă 2011: 435), to Tiraspol. The Statue of MCM (1993, Article 11) explicitly postulates that the bishops of the Orthodox Church in Moldova must be citizens of the Republic of Moldova and Justinian became one only in 2001<sup>24</sup>. However, over the course of time the head of the Transnistrian ecclesiastical structure has been publicly accepted by the leadership of MCM, including by being awarded an order<sup>25</sup> by Archbishop Vladimir. This development demonstrates the limits of the MCM agency “at home”, let alone in its relation with other parties.

The possibilities for action open for MCM are restrained by its Selfhood discourse also as they derive from a certain articulation of *adherence to the canons*:

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<sup>24</sup> Radio Europa/Liberă Moldova: <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/1991550.html>

<sup>25</sup> Newspaper *Timpul*: <https://www.timpul.md/articol/-fostul-episcop-de-tiraspol-decorat-de-mitropolitul-vladimir-cu-ordinul-stefan-cel-mare-15247.html>



Canonical relationships [with the Moscow Patriarchate] remain because canonically we should depend only on some Church. If we do not depend on the Church of Moscow, then we either depend on the Church of Romania, or the Church of Constantinople. Because if we break this branch, then we will become a dry branch that has no canonical connection to any Church. But like this, through the Church of Moscow Patriarchate, we still have the canonical connection to all the churches around the world. (Metropolitan Vladimir, *Interview*, Moldova Suverana 1992)

This representation of ecclesiastical power relations between “the Church in Moldova” and the mentioned *external* autocephalous subjects is pivotal. The normative *outside dependency* of the canonicity of the Moldovan ecclesial space objectifies the domestic ecclesial structures and naturalizes their subordination. Any given structure of the Orthodox Church is theologically legitimate inasmuch as it is in canonical communion with the rest of the Orthodox Ecumene. The aforementioned “connection” representation is, of course, corresponding with the norms of Christian ecclesiology from the latter’s very inception. However, the lack of subjective identification with any distinct *internal* object/discourse and the complete *externalization* of decision-making, responsibility, and power comes to testify for the passive Selfhood MCM construct for itself:

“The decision for whether [the Church in Moldova] [to] become a Totally Autocephalous Church [or not] is to be decided by Patriarch Alexy of Moscow. [By] His Holiness Patriarch Teoctist of Bucharest.” (ibid.)

The MCM, as it appears in its discourse, is not even entitled to openly and directly articulate its preference for a degree of jurisdictional independence. The very articulation of a wish in that direction is not in itself uncanonical by any means. The Orthodox Church in Finland, for instance, has officially aspired for autocephaly in 1980<sup>26</sup> and although this peruse has not been achieved, no one has questioned the canonicity of this Church for that matter.

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<sup>26</sup> History of the Orthodox Church of Finland in the Catholic Near East Welfare Association’s website: <http://www.cnewa.org/default.aspx?ID=30&pagetypeID=9&sitecode=HQ&pageno=1>

In sum, the MCM's Selfhood discourse constructs an ecclesiastical actor whose relative autonomy is linked with the independence of the state it "inhabits". In that sense, MCM is articulated as a *state Church* which cares for the religious education in public schools and the close cooperation with the army. Notwithstanding the identification of MCM with the distinct object/discourse *Republic of Moldova*, this link seems not to be enough to produce radical ecclesiastical subjectivity. That is so, because the power relations between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Metropolitanate are constructed in MCM's discourse not only as just and meaningful, but also as natural and organic.

## Conclusions

The aim of this study was to understand better the process of jurisdictional fragmentation in the Orthodox Church. The comparison between the constellation of Macedonia and the one of Moldova provided an empirical ground whereby "conventional" conceptual, theoretical, and methodological frameworks fail to make sense.

The analysis of the Selfhood discourses of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric, the Bessarabian Metropolitanate, and the Metropolitanate of Chişinău and all Moldova has demonstrated the analytical potential of an alternative analytical approach. Unlike previous accounts which emphasize on certain Orthodox socio-political *essentials* ("Orthodox civilization", "Church-State symphony", "caesaropapism") or on nation- and state-centric explanation ("ecclesiastical nationalism", "instrumentalism"), the current study highlights the constitutive relation between discourse and ecclesiastical agency.

The key conclusions stemming from the findings of this study can be formulated as follows. The *structures of meaning* of the Orthodox Church jurisdictions make ecclesiastical agency possible. Against the background of the modern paradigm for socio-political representation *in* and *by* the Church, the ecclesiastical agency emerges as possible radical subjectivity when given *meaning* is in a state of dislocation. Under such conditions, a nascent Church-Subject emerges as group representative as it articulates

identification with a distinct object/discourse while simultaneously representing the existing power relations as unjust and/or meaningless. This process, which one can call *ecclesiastical subjectivization*, could take different forms, the most common of which is the national(ist) one. However, *national(ist) identity* is by far not the only shape ecclesiastical particularism could take, as many examples demonstrate. What is more, nationhood and statehood cannot be considered to automatically lead to church subjectivization, as this study shows. Alternatively, ecclesiastical independence of a degree could become itself an object/discourse of identification for socio-political particularism.

The analysis of the discursive encounters in the constellations Macedonia and Moldova clearly demonstrates how different constructions of ecclesiastical Selfhood enable and/or constrain actors to act in certain ways. Despite the existence of Moldovan statehood and, arguably, of a Moldovan national discourse in the 1990s, none of the relevant ecclesiastical organizations in this constellation has articulated unjust and/or meaningless power relations vis-à-vis *all* the respective authorities. That is what explains the lack of shifts in the direction of and the absence of any official aspirations towards autocephalous ecclesiastical governance in Moldova. In contrast, notwithstanding the debatable character of the Macedonian statehood in the 1960s, as well as the relative lack of sedimentation of Macedonian national discourse at the time, the Macedonian Orthodox Church has evidently constructed a radical Selfhood. The latter has been articulated on the basis of an identification of the church with a *primordial Macedonian nation*, a *historical Macedonian statehood*, and a *distinct jurisdictional legacy*. These articulations, “naturally” combined with a representation of unjust power relations with regards to the Serbian Orthodox Church have made possible the emergence of a particular Macedonian ecclesiastical subject.

The implications of these findings are to found on all conceptual, theoretical, and methodological levels. The notion of “particular Orthodox Church” proves to be, in terms of ecclesiastical subjectivity, more relevant than the term “national Church”. The distinction, again with regards to subjectivity, between a “particular church” and a (“recognized”) “autocephalous Church” comes to underline the constitutive role of discourse for the construction of power and agency with respect to Orthodox Church’s administration. From theoretical perspective, that means that an ecclesiastical structure

does not necessarily have to be *recognized* in order to play an important role on domestic level, and not only. However, the inclusion of particular church actors in an “inter-ecclesiastical society” remains a key imperative for them with different degrees of urgency.

Another theoretical implication of this study’s findings is related with the mutually constitutive relationship between ecclesiastical discourses and other societal structures of meaning. The former are embedded in the latter, but are not to be treated as automatically determined by them. Within the inter-ecclesiastical society there is a relatively independent *internal* level of relational identities, rules, norms, and power structures. A crucial aspect of this internal level are, as previous literature has pointed out (Zabarah 2011), the “institutional legacies” that actors “inherit”. However, as this study shows, the “inherited structures” do change and the agencies that reshape them are not to be undermined.

Methodologically, the utilized poststructuralist discourse analysis demonstrates its effective applicability when it comes to research questions concerned with construction of social structures. However, the limitations of this methodological framework are related with the analytical boundaries of the question *how made possible*. The question *why possible* is usually – in the tradition that this study is inspired from – discarded as irrelevant, because of the contingent character of social structures. However, the questions *what sustains* particular churches *and what determines the scale of their influence* have to be addressed also from another angle. The discourse analytical perspective remains crucial even for that matter, but what also has to be taken into account is the dimension that usually goes under the category “material”.

With regards to recommendations for further research, this latter category is to be taken not as in dichotomous opposition to *discourse*, but as (analytically abstracted) dimension *in relation* with it. Besides the purely financial aspect of ecclesiastical administration and the legal-institutional environment in which it operates, what is worth analyzing in respect of emergence (and maintenance, expansion/shrinking, disappearance) of particular churches are various extra-verbal dimensions, such as architectural, iconographic, and chanting styles, choice of clerical clothing, ordering of ecclesiastical calendar, etc. The relation of verbal and extra-verbal discourses with psychological *affect* or what David

Howarth calls “after” in “Poststructuralism and After” (2013) is more than relevant in the field of research in question. As Stavrakakis (2007: 163-189) suggests, the analysis of discourse is to be supplemented with emphasis on what Lacan and his followers call *jouissance* (e.g., Žižek 2002). Methodically, however, the steps in this analytical direction are yet to be shaped and “calibrated”.

In conclusion, the structures of the Orthodox Church, in Horovun’s terms, are inevitably connected with and, in a certain sense, dependent on social divisions and fragmentations. However, the innate normativity of the Church requires it to be universal and ecclesiastical particularism is definitely at odds with that principle. Poststructuralist perspectives suggest that both universality and particularity are never fully complete and in that sense the ought-to-be ecumenical Church cannot escape a certain type of jurisdictional partition. The question that remains, however, is: can the Church’s jurisdiction escape both sovereigntist particularism and hegemonic universalism?

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